

HOMAGE TO ANANDA COOMARASWAMY — S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM



# Homage to

Ananda Coomaraswamy

(A MEMORIAL VOLUME)

Edited by

S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM



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
**HOMAGE**  
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**Ananda Coomaraswamy**  
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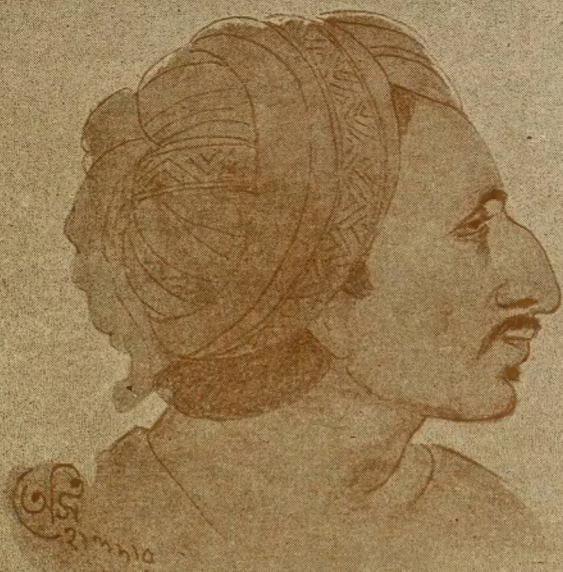
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**Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy was one of the supreme minds and thinkers of modern times—a syncretist of inspired genius, gifted with a vast encyclopaedic and universal culture.**

**—Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji.**





Ananda Coomaraswamy  
as I saw him in 1909-10  
From an old sketch.

*Sri Asit K. Haldar*

**DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY (1909-1910)**  
**(A sketch by Sri Asit Kumar Haldar)**

Indira Gandhi National  
Centre for the Arts

*Homage to*

# Ananda Coomaraswamy



*(Woodcut by Sri S. Sanmuganathan, from a photograph of  
Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy)*

*Jayeva patya usati visasre tanvam at manah*

*Yasmai kala Bharati tam KUMARASVAMINAM numah*

—Dr. V. Raghavan.

There was one person, to whom, I think William Rothenstein introduced me, whom I might not have met otherwise and to whose influence I am deeply grateful; I mean the philosopher and theologian, Ananda Coomaraswamy. Others have written the truth about life and religion and man's work. Others have written good clear English. Others have had the gift of witty exposition. Others have understood the metaphysics of Christianity and others have understood the methaphysics of Hinduism and Buddhism. Others have understood the true significance of erotic drawings and sculptures. Others have seen the relationships of the true and the good and the beautiful. Others have had apparently unlimited learning. Others have loved; others have been kind and generous. But I know of no one else in whom all these gifts and all these powers have been combined. I dare not confess myself his disciple; that would only embarrass him. I can only say that I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding.

Eric Gill.

\* \* \* \* \*

Today if India takes her due rank as a first class artistic power, it is in large measure owing to Coomaraswamy.

Sir William Rothenstein.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ananda Coomaraswamy is one of those greatest Hindus who nourished like Tagore, on the culture of Europe and Asia and justifiably proud of the splendid civilization have conceived the task of working for Eastern and Western thought for the good of humanity.

Romain Rolland.

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*To*  
*The Memory of*  
*Gurudev Ananda Coomaraswamy*

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*"None knew thee but to love thee,  
None named thee but to praise."*





## HOMAGE TO ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

Part I—A 70th Birthday Volume—1947

Illustrated

(Price Rs. 15 or Malayan \$10/-)

(300 copies printed)

Part II—A Memorial Volume—1951

Illustrated

(Price Rs. 15 or Malayan \$10/-)

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*Edited by*  
S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM,  
Kuantan, Malaya.

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*Prime Minister  
Ceylon*

Colombo, 31st October, 1951.

I congratulate Mr.S. Durai Raja Singam on his very useful collection of the tributes paid to the memory of one of the greatest sons of Sri Lanka, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

We owe to Dr. Coomaraswamy, as to no other man, the stimulus for the revival in modern times of our cultural and spiritual heritage. Though not himself a creative artist, he possessed almost a divine understanding to be able to read, in the few surviving works in stone, metal and wood of our ancients, their thoughts and ideals, cultural accomplishments and source of inspiration. His breadth of vision and penetrating study of all cultures earned for him a leadership of worldwide recognition. He will, for ever, remain a real Guru to Ceylon aspirants in the field of study of our heritage.

*S. Senanayake*  
PRIME MINISTER,  
Ceylon.



Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Early in 1947 when Durai Raja Singam wrote to Ananda Coomaraswamy for his 'blessings' and permission to undertake the task of compiling what came to be the first edition of *Garland of Tributes*, Coomaraswamy's response was a definite 'no.'

Not long before that Ananda Coomaraswamy had been approached about writing an autobiography and to this his reply was: "I have neither the disposition, interest or time, what's more, this would be entirely anti-traditional, altogether against the grain. There is but seldom the occasion for autobiography and these must remain rare. For me, from my point of view, this would be *aswargya* against heaven."

But when in September 1947, it was the Lord's will to take back his own, we who are still here, in exile, considered the matter with friends, from another angle, and it was decided that what was 'correctly' objectionable for Ananda Coomaraswamy was not equally so for us. To collect and make available impressions and memories of people who knew Coomaraswamy had a definite use. And all who contributed both partake and share with others something of their experience—that which could be put into words, of this 'pilgrim' who for a time, walked among us.

Indeed, the *Garland of Tributes* and now its second edition may one day serve as an introduction to a biography. A biography in which the emphasis is on the writings, and from the point of view of Coomaraswamy's own aphorism:

Contra Cartesium

That I think is proof *Thou* art  
The only In-dividual, from whose dividuality  
My postulated individuality depends

A work based on any other premise would be anomalous.

This understood there yet remains for us who still need signs to go by, and want to call to mind a person's accidents, of having been, in the sense of *ad-cadere*, the sequence of events as they chanced to fall, that were 'the way' for Coomaraswamy—that we too may recognize probability of things and happenings, as possible vehicles for us.

It is therefore good to have a source from which to draw first impressions, ideas and experiences about any illustrious being, regardless who, when or where.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our times is that men like Coomaraswamy are so few—and even of these few we know so little. In our times, times of chaos, these are the individuals who *carry-over* for us the ancient knowledge, that we may not forget.....for our heritage consists not alone of the follies of mankind but also something of their ancient wisdom.

With this in mind Coomaraswamy explains that his task, and relatively speaking our's, is to consider that we are in a state of "amnesia," and mistaken identity. Let us recall that the "person" we are is primarily a mask and a disguise, that "all the world is a stage,".....it may be a childish illusion to have assumed that the *dramatis personae* were the "very persons" of the actors themselves. So that the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* is an absolute *non sequitur* in a circle. One cannot say, *Cogito*, but only *cogitatur*. That Spirit or Life is no more or less "mine" than "yours," but It never became Itself anyone. That Principle that informs us and enlivens one body after another, that is never born and never dies, though president at every birth and death.....*dove s'appunta*

*ogni ubi ed ogni quando*, place without dimensions without duration, of which empirical experience is impossible, and can only come to be known without intermediary. This is the Life or "Ghost" that we give up, when we pass on, that the Spirit return to its source and the dust whence it came.

"All traditions affirm that 'there are two in us'; the Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, Islam, Hebrew, Christian and Vedantic command of each of us, 'know thy Self,' and we have it explicitly, "That (self's Immortal Self) art Thou." The question then rises, in whom—when I go hence, shall I be going forth? In my self, or its Immortal Self? The answer depends on to whom the question is put—this man so-and-so, or this Man in every man? In the case of the former, there is only one answer; "What is there of him that could survive, other than some inheritance in his descendants?" Of the latter, one can ask, "What is there of him to die?"

"That Immortal Man in each of us may say with St. Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me." Whoever can say that, or its equivalent in any other tongue, *der einen Geistssprache*; is a *Jivan-mukta*, 'Free here and now,' or as the Muslims would say, a 'Man of the moment,' who is already 'a dead man walking,' indeed, what but the Atman, in these survives?

"It is toward this liberation that 'all Scripture cries aloud for freedom from self.' Toward this end Coomaraswamy spent a life-time, learning, finding the know to 'know-him Self'.....to assimilate—"Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Road was but Myself toward Myself" (Faridu'r Din 'Attar)." And for us—our deep concern with all of this is such because we are drawn, as "pieces of steel, and Thy love is the Magnet."

Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy and  
Rama P. Coomaraswamy.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Dr. Coomaraswamy has won distinction as an apostle of culture and art. His life should be an example and an inspiration to our youth.—Sir P. Arunachalam.*

It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to be able to publish a companion volume to my Homage to Kala Yogi Ananda Coomaraswamy (Part I) a 70th Birthday Volume, which was brought out in 1947.

The publication of this Memorial volume was only made possible through the innumerable contributions and pictures sent by his admirers all over the world.

My only regret is that it has not been possible to include in this volume all the contributions received by me.

The views expressed by the various contributors are their personal opinions and should not necessarily be taken as endorsed by me.

This is a labour of love in order to cherish the memory of *Gurudev*. The editing of this volume has been an act of devotion to my *Gurudev*.

I am thankful to the Rt. Hon'ble D. S. Senanayake, P.C., Prime Minister of Ceylon for the Foreword he has been kind enough to write.

My deep debt of gratitude is due to Mrs. D. L. Coomaraswamy and Shri Rama P. Coomaraswamy for the Introduction and their invaluable assistance.

My grateful thanks are due to all who have so kindly helped me with their contributions; for their friendliness, patience and courtesy which has been very encouraging.

Kuantan, Malaya,  
November 9th, 1951.

S. Durai Raja Singam.

# Messages

From

***His Excellency Sri C. Rajagopalachar,  
Last Governor-General of India.  
and at present Home Minister,  
Government of India.***

*Among the few who saw beauty and the form of God in such beauty, Ananda Coomaraswamy ranks high. He was a great man and saw many things which others did not see.*

\*

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\*

***His Excellency Sir Henry Monch-Mason Moore,  
G.C.M.G., First Governor-General of Ceylon.***

*For many years now Dr. Coomaraswamy has lived out of Ceylon, but his writings have kept before men's minds the cultural heritage of Ceylon, and, I am sure, have inspired Ceylonese to appreciate more deeply and intensely their own traditions. Dr. Coomaraswamy is a world figure in the realm of scholarship.*

*Coomaraswamy stands out among the sons of Ceylon. He has directed his great gifts to drawing humanity together by showing them the affinities of their culture, and has thus helped in promoting peace and understanding among the peoples of the world.*

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***Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, Oegstgeest, Holland.***

*Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the champion of Indian Art, has earned the lasting gratitude of modern India.*

***His Excellency Dr. Rajendra Prasad,  
President of the Republic of India.***

*Dr. Coomaraswamy was indeed a Rishi who gave to the world a vision of the great beauty of Indian Art and revealed to us the supreme nobility of our cultural heritage. His place among the thinkers of the world and the nation builders of India shall always remain very high.*

\* \* \* \*

***H.E. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Ambassador for  
India in U.S.S.R.***

*I had been a student of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's writings for many years and had the great pleasure of meeting him at Boston in 1946. Among those who are responsible not only for the Indian Renaissance but for a new Renaissance in the world Dr. Coomaraswamy holds a pre-eminent position. It is my hope that students who are now led away by the passing fashions of our age will turn to his writings for a proper orientation.*

\* \* \* \*

***Dr. T. S. Eliot, London.***

*I am certainly an admirer of Dr. Coomaraswamy's work and I have found myself again and again in very close sympathy with his thought. I agree that his life work should be honoured and that anything possible should be done which would make his work and his philosophy more widely known.*

\* \* \* \*

***Dr. Alfred Salmony, New York.***

*To me, like to most, Ananda Coomaraswamy remains the unfailing transmitter of the eternal traditions.*

**Dr. Aldous Huxley, Los Angeles, U.S.A.**

Unfortunately I never met Dr. Coomaraswamy personally, though we exchanged several letters after the publication of my book "The Perennial Philosophy." It was only through his writings that I knew him and was able to profit by that extraordinary combination of vast learning and penetrating insight which gave to Coomaraswamy his unique importance as a mediator between East and West.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. G. H. Edgell, Director, Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston, U.S.A.**

The great scholar Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy who had been so long with us in the Museum was the most learned member of our staff, a great philosopher as well as a great connoisseur of the art of Asia. When we met at his 70th Birthday Dinner none of us dreamed that Dr. Coomaraswamy might not be with us for another quarter of a century.

\* \* \* \*

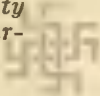
**Dr. George P. Conger, Ph.D., University of  
Minnesota, U.S.A.**

As a human bond and link between East and West, few men have been as effective as was Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. As long as he was with us, the immortal East could not be altogether strange to any one, and to those who had begun to know the East, he was a constant stimulus. We need more men like him, men whose words reach all the way around the earth.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. M. Albert Gleizes.**

Like a fertilising spring rain which sets in motion the expectant subterranean germinations the radiant wisdom of Coomaraswamy stimulates a vital activity in those who, having looked on death, desire resurrection.



**Sir C. V. Raman, F.R.S., N.L.**

*I have much pleasure in associating myself with the tribute of homage being paid in this volume to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. The fame he attained as an art connoisseur was truly international. To honour his memory is both a duty and a pleasure to us all. May many others follow successfully in his footsteps!*

\* \* \* \*

**H.E. Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Ambassador for India in the United States of America.**

*Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy spent a life-time interpreting the spirit of Asian Art to the West; yet he was not merely a teacher of art but a great humanist, a seeker after truth through visions of beauty. His austere and devoted life as well as his profound writings will inspire generations to come to seek human understanding through aesthetic delights.*

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. F. S. C. Northrop, New York.**

*What distinguished Ananda Coomaraswamy was his penetration beneath the fruits of art to their cultural roots and his recognition that these deeper sources are always profoundly and even technically philosophical in character.*

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. W. Stede, London.**

*Dr. Coomaraswamy was one of the greatest and purest idealists of our times, of a most genuine and inspiring character.*

**Mr. H. S. L. Polak, London.**

No three representatives of Asia, each in his different way, have done more to reveal Eastern culture to America than Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Coomaraswamy. The name of Coomaraswamy will long be associated in the United States. His illuminating writings and lectures have brought the East and West together far more closely than the more ephemeral contributions of the late comers to the American scene. It was a great satisfaction to be able to meet him in New York during my American tour.

\* \* \* \*

**The Hon. Shri Sri Prakasa, New Delhi.**

I deem it a privilege to associate myself with other friends in paying my tribute of respect and admiration to the memory of the late Shri A. K. Coomaraswamy. I was very young when he came, as far back back as 1909, and stayed with us at Banaras for long weeks. It was he who first discovered the beauty and the significance of many old paintings we had in the family; and it was he who first made not only me but innumerable others in the land—look at Indian art with another eye. His place will always be high among those who in very difficult and adverse circumstances, have helped to recover our past for ourselves and made us feel proud of the achievements of our ancestors so that we may be able to build our future on right lines.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. W. G. Raffe, London.**

Dr. Coomaraswamy was one of the great minds of India; his real grasp and understanding of art was tremendous.

***Dr. Langdon Warner, U.S.A.***

*It is my firm belief that our true debt to Ananda Coomaraswamy will not be appreciated during his life-time and that a century may elapse before art critics and historians of religions and philosophers will turn to his writings for source material. For this reason I congratulate you on your plan to prove to him that his own generation is not entirely without gratitude.*

\* \* \* \*

***Dr. Andreas Nell, D.Litt., Colombo.***

*Ceylon owes to Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy gratitude and thanks for his enthusiasm, unwearied efforts and co-operative spirit in his participation in early efforts by a few Ceylonese fifty years ago great cultural, social and political advances which have now reached growth such as knowledge and appreciation of several arts and crafts, revival of Kandyan dancing, social reform, social services, responsible representative government and the Ceylon University.*

\* \* \* \*

***Shri K. P. Kesava Menon, High Commissioner  
for India in Ceylon, Colombo.***

*I have been a great admirer of Dr. Coomaraswamy. He saw beauty in everything and everywhere and has been a great force during his life time in bringing about understanding among the people of the world. His writings and teachings will continue to inspire the present and future generations in the promotion of peace and goodwill.*

## A Letter from

*The Marquess of Zetland, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.*

16-1-50

*My Dear Sir,*

*You will have the gratitude of the large circle of the late Dr. Coomaraswamy's admirers for the tribute which you have paid to his genius in your "Homage to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy."*

*With his wide knowledge of the culture of India and his literary ability, he was particularly well qualified to interpret to the Western mind, the art forms, the religious concepts and the philosophical masterpieces which are characteristic of the many-sided civilisation of Hindu India.*

*I have myself profitted greatly from his writings and I have little doubt that I am but one of many who have done so. Indeed, the fact that you are engaged in preparing a second edition of your work is in itself sufficient evidence of the truth of this assumption. And you have, I need hardly say, my sincere congratulations on the successful accomplishment of the task which you have undertaken.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Zetland.*

*S. Durai Raja Singam Esq.,  
Kuantan.*

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### *A Request to the Reader*

I am engaged upon a study of the life, letters and works of the late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. To augment my collection of material, I should be grateful if anyone who has letters, pamphlets, articles, tributes, reviews, books or information dealing with him would communicate with me. Letters and Mss. will be copied and returned by registered post; and a catalogue of all sources of information will be published. I shall be glad to hear of any photographs, paintings, drawings, or other material that should be recorded in the preparation of this work.

S. Durai Raja Singam,  
Abdullah School,  
Kuantan, Malaya.

# HOMAGE

TO

Ananda . K. Coomaraswamy (Vol. II)  
A Memorial Volume.

IN MEMORIAM—ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

(*Dr. Robert Ulich, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A*)

Ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's mind was nourished by two extremely distinct cultures, the cultures of India and of the Occident. We may doubt whether such a duality is always a blessing in terms of peace and happiness, because the abundance of impressions and the tension of contrasts may sometimes be too heavy a burden. But in the case of Ananda Coomaraswamy the tension—which certainly existed in this sensitive soul—was of a productive kind; it was a challenge under which his own personality developed into depths and heights generally unknown to weak mortals and from which we all have profited who are here assembled to pay homage to a great and dear friend. For through interpreting the East to his Western contemporaries he has helped them better to understand their own West, and through interpreting the West to his Indian compatriots, not only in its greatness but also in its menace, he has helped them better to understand their own oriental culture.

But merely as an analyst of cultures Ananda Coomaraswamy would not be sufficiently characterized. There are, though not many, nevertheless a few, who have done the same. Perhaps he could achieve his mastership in analysis only because he was one of the

last great polyhistor, or men of universal knowledge, as far as our time still allows such always relative achievement. We know that as a young man he was one of the most promising scientists trained by the University of London, and entrusted with the difficult task of exploring the geology of his native country Ceylon. During all his life Nature and its beauty were for him a source of unending inspiration and recreation. In the company of his wife who, as we all know, followed him not only along the paths of Nature, but also along the paths of the Spirit, he liked to show his friends the plants he cultivated at his home.

But he soon extended his search into Nature over into the search for the creative forces which work in the products of the mind, though he never separated the two, for there always was a grain of pantheism in Ananda Coomaraswamy as in all great mystics. In one of his addresses he calls himself an Orientalist who is "in fact almost as much a Platonist as a Mediaevalist." But what did it mean for him to be an Orientalist? It meant for him to become one of the greatest experts of Oriental art, not only Indian, but Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and Japanese as well. It meant being a philosophical as well as philo-logical knower of the great sources of Indian religious insight, a philosopher not in the sense of a mere historian of ideas, but in the true sense of an Indian "Guru," a "destroyer of darkness" who understands how to keep the torch of light burning so that it can be carried unhurt from ancient to ever new generations, and a philologist not in the sense of an expert in words, or a literary critic, but of an expert in meanings, capable of following the significance of a term through the ancient languages of the East and the West up into our great modern

literatures. Thus the Platonist and Mediaevalist merged in him with the Orientalist, and in consequence of the greatness of the fusion it will be difficult to state in which field he excelled more.

But even the wealth of comparative knowledge explains by no means the uniqueness of Ananda Coomaraswamy's mind and his influence on his friends. Here there may be other men, though only a very, very few, who possess a similarly vast knowledge. The miracle rather is how a man with a knowledge extending over so various fields of nature and culture could avoid becoming an encyclopaedist in the quantitative sense of the word. How could his pansophia, his familiarity with so many things and ideas, develop into such a profound synthesis and unity that every part in this wide expanse could become a symbol and representation of the Whole?

In asking this question we come, it seems to me, close to the center of Ananda's personality, so far, at least, as friends can understand each other. In going through an unusual wealth of experience and in leading his mind into the most distant fields of knowledge, he not only broadened, but also found himself. And he could do so only because he was given the grace—and he knew that it was grace—of uniting his ever-growing self with the Spiritual Center of the world for which we have only symbolical expressions such as the Brahma of the Indians, the Logos of the Platonists, and the Urquell of Meister Eckart. Thus, to use a phrase of Ananda Coomaraswamy's friend, the French philosopher Rene Guenon, *l'ordre cosmique et l'ordre humain* became one and the same in the thought and work of Ananda.

In consequence of this firmly established order of

values he threw overboard rigorously all that seemed to him unessential, becoming one of the sharpest critics of our modern quantitative civilization and its destructive influences on the souls of men, and an uncompromising defender of the cultures he considered still to be embedded in the deeper matrix of life, as against those he considered uprooted. At the same time the unity he felt in the order of the cosmos expressed itself more and more also in his own creations. There are few men whose style of writing is so cogently expressive of their style of thinking as his. Like in old pieces of rare craftsmanship there is not a part in his sentences that could be taken out of its context without destroying the whole meaning; there is not one of his hundreds of quotations from many ages and literatures which could appear as a mere display of scholarship. Nor is there any comparison in his writings which moves merely on the horizontal level—just adding one idea to the other because of some external similarity. All his comparisons point toward a common center in which the individual phenomena participate so that one can be explained with reference to the other. Finally, all the essays written by Ananda Coomaraswamy are linked together like the pillars and girders in a beautifully constructed edifice, though he never wrote a philosophical “system” in the usual sense of the word.

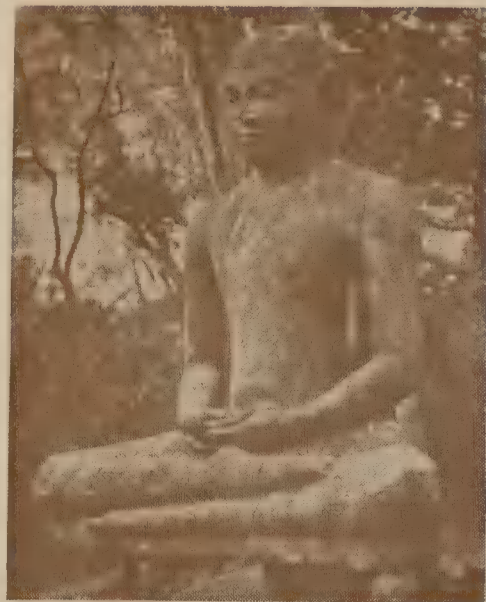
Needless to say, this unio mystica between Ananda’s individual mind and the Universal Mind would not help us to explain his thought and style unless it gave us also a clue to the understanding of his personality. Everyone who met him was impressed by the dignity and kindness which radiated from him like rays of warmth from a gentle fire. Yet, as with all great men



### SIVA NATARAJA

(Copper casting, Ceylon, 8th century A.D.)

One of the best known books of Dr. Ananda. K. Coomraaswamy is his *Dance of Siva.*



The Buddha in Samadhi  
(Colossal image at Anuradhapura, Ceylon, 2nd century A.D.)

Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy's best known books on Buddhism are *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, *Hinduism and Buddhism* and *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists.*

who are really kind and not only polite, one also felt that this gentle fire could burst into flames of passion if the sanctuary of his beliefs was violated by people of bad will or ignorance. Therefore he dared tell any Western audience, however illustre, what he thought about Western imperialism, its cultural arrogance, and its false missionary zeal. But even in his hours of ire the great or the Universal Spirit, stood behind him as a force of reconciliation. He rarely attacked the sins of Western men without saying at the same time, "Why did you not listen to the better men in your own midst? Not to Lord Macaulay and Rudyard Kipling, but to the reverential wisdom of James Tod, Sir George Birdwood, and Sister Nivedita?"

No one can express himself in this continuous unity of devotion and objectivity, of attachment and detachment, no one can act so valiantly as Ananda Coomaraswamy, and at the same time retain the broad perspectives of rationality, unless he has achieved the unio mystica of which we spoke, and has opened the windows of his soul to the influx of the Divine. Few men, therefore, were so entitled as he was to explain to us the sacred writings of his home country, especially the Bhagavad-Gita.

Thus action is of Brahma, who is one,  
The Only, All-pervading; at all times  
Present in the sacrifice. He that abstains  
To help the rolling wheels of this great world,  
Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life,  
Shameful and vain.....

.....Therefore, the task prescribed  
With spirit unattached gladly perform,  
Since in performance of plain duty man  
Mounts to his highest bliss.



It was not a humble resignation on the part of Ananda Coomaraswamy, but rather the deepest fulfillment of his proud belief in the ultimate superiority of the Spirit that he said to us at his seventieth birthday, "I wish to tell you that I have added nothing new." Through achieving in his own life the inner unity which exists essentially between Being and Becoming, Mind and Nature, Art and Craftsmanship, Attachment and Detachment, Action and Contemplation, Ananda Coomaraswamy has become for us the living symbol of the *Philosophia Perennis*, in which he believed, an oasis in the deserts of modernity, a living truth of the words which he used as the motto for his essay on *The Mediaeval Theory of Beauty* and which we quoted at the beginning:

Ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur.

[*Address at the Funeral Service on September 9th, 1947, Needham, Massachusetts.*]

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## THE FIRST PHILOSOPHER TEACHING IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

(*The Earl of Portsmouth, London*).

I have always felt very humble in reading Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's work before a mind not only capable of such vast erudition, but which possessed the spirit to distil wisdom from it and independence to question the very basis of our false assumptions. And he did this without arrogance and without fear or favour.

The reason why I wrote of him as "*the first philosopher teaching in the Western Hemisphere*" was because of that capacity of his to distil wisdom out of knowledge, combining it with such nobility of spirit;



**Dr. Ananda. Coomaraswamy (right) photographed  
with Dr. Murray Fowler.**



and because these two qualities are more needed than almost any other quality, if anything of worth is to survive the materialist disasters of to-day.

May I end on a personal note. That I should have had the privilege of corresponding with him, and to have been quoted by him on more than one occasion, has reinforced me in the work that lies nearest to my heart more than any approval I might have received from anyone else of whom I knew.

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## IN MEMORIAM—ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY.

(*Dr. Murray Fowler, New York.*)

“A man without a vocation is an idler”—A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art.*

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy died suddenly at his home in Needham, Massachusetts, United States of America, on September 9, 1947, a little more than two weeks after his seventieth birthday. He was born on August 22, 1877, in Colombo, Ceylon, the son of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy and an English mother. He was educated in England, where, with characteristic diligence and despatch, he developed an early interest in the taxonomic method of the natural sciences into a thorough and exact knowledge of geology (in particular, of mineralogy) which led to his appointment, at the young age of 25, to the directorship of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon and, thus, to his return to his native country. This residence in Ceylon not only enabled him to produce the work for which the University of London awarded him the doctorate in science, but also turned the keen mind of the already

mature young man toward the arts and culture of India, thus determining the later course of his life. In 1916 he became a member of the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and he remained there until his death.

Although in his later years he regarded all scientific training as merely inadequate, Coomaraswamy never turned his back upon his own early education or denied the value of exact, carefully acquired, and properly assimilated knowledge of detail. His evident joy in gardening (although he claimed only to have inherited a green thumb from his mother) was clearly heightened by the fullness of his botanical information and lore. The careful labeling of his plants, his provision of an always astonishing seasonal variety of flowers, and his willingness to answer a visitor's question about anything in his garden—whether with classification by genus and species, or by the recital of *Agni's* connection with the blue lotus (a specimen of which he had in his small lily pond): these things were to many of us quite as characteristic of the man as his printed words. He was a rarely gentle soul (yet a caustic critic of the insincere), a most delightful companion, a wit, a kind and understanding friend. Coomaraswamy's fame rests firmly upon his reputation as the greatest authority of his time on Indian art. With advancing years he became an insistent, impelling force in the development of a strong and vigorous æsthetic theory; and in the last two decades he moved on from æsthetics to philosophy and religion, revealing himself finally as a theologian of wide learning and profound and sympathetic understanding. His early life was spent in learning to read symbols, his middle years in understanding them, the closing of his life in

transcending them.

To many people he must have appeared to be a man of two personalities, if not, indeed, two persons, for he did, during the time of his life, the work of two men. The daily routine which he for years followed enabled him to produce a really phenomenal amount. From five-thirty in the morning until nine, when he left for the Museum in Boston, he studied and wrote at home; at the Museum he continued his work until four-thirty in the afternoon; in the evening (after, in the proper season, a spell of gardening) he returned to his books and typewriter again, staying at his desk until ten o'clock. His rate of publication was astonishing.

The results of this regular program may be divided into two parts: the contributions to knowledge in many provinces of the arts; and the exegetical writing of later years. The earlier period begins in 1908 with *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*; it continues until 1938, and it extends even beyond that time, if such volumes as *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?*, published in 1946, may be counted as belonging to this period. It was, that is to say, Coomaraswamy the art-historian and critic who produced *Notes on Jaina Art* (1914), itself the second publication of any kind on Jain painting, which placed the date of the earliest known paintings on paper a good century and a half earlier than the one previously accepted; *Visvakarma, One Hundred Examples of Indian Sculpture* (1914); the exquisitely sensitive *Rajput Painting* (1916), which brought this all but unknown school to the notice of the West; *The History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927), a model of objective, historical scholarship; the Catalogues of Indian Art in the

Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (1922, 1924, 1927, 1930), which record that remarkable collection in part gathered by himself; *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934), which applied to æsthetics the sound criticism of disciplined traditional techniques and traditional knowledge; the *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* (1935); and hundreds of articles written for journals of art throughout the world. But it was the philosopher who wrote *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* (1914) and *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (1916), books which look forward to the now famous *A New Approach to the Vedas* (1933), a volume which precisely fulfills the promise of its title, opening up those marvellous scriptures which for a century had been known, but not understood, in the West. And it was the theologian, finally, who wrote *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power* (1942), *Hinduism and Buddhism* (1945), *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* (1947), and the latest publication before his death, *Time and Eternity* (1947).

Of especial interest today, moreover, is the volume called *Essays in National Idealism*, for in it, at the early date of 1909, Coomaraswamy evinced the same intense sympathy with the national aspirations of India which characterizes many of his later writings; yet he tempered, even then, his own enthusiasm, and cautioned others, with the equally characteristic reflection that "we should endeavour more to be great than to possess great things".

But if it be convenient to divide Coomaraswamy's work into two parts, it should be kept in mind that there are in reality not two periods, but one straight line of development without a break. The rigid scholarly disciplines of science and history were but ancillary to

the fine native philosophical mind of the man, which, in the end, was able so profoundly to understand the ideal world of the Vedas, Plato, and Christianity. Coomaraswamy's earnest search for principles of art led directly to his own re-discovery and definite re-affirmation of one Principle as essential to all criticism of life; and the man of learning, the Orientalist, the critic, the scholar, became finally the theologian which his whole life had premised.

The teleologist is naif who looks for completeness under the sun, when he cannot see beyond it—the teleios is for the eye of faith alone; yet it is with a joyous sense of wonder that one now and then seems to catch a glimpse of purpose in a human life. Coomaraswamy's enunciation of principles was never unconscious: it was the utterance of a belief; yet even his clear adherence to the *Philosophia Perennis* (in the words of Shankara. "There is no transmigrator other than the Lord") but gave the approval of mature judgment to what he seemed to have known, in other terms, from the beginning of his thoughtful days. "There cannot", he said in *The Dance of Shiva* (in an essay first published in 1915), "be anything absolutely unique in the experience of any one race"; and again, "When I say that works of art are reminders, ..... I suggest that the vision of even the original artist may be rather a discovery than a creation." Thirty years later he reiterated these ideas in a sharper idiom: "We cannot pretend really to have understood such arts as these [Mediaeval Christian and Asiatic] merely from the provincial standpoint of our own humanism. The Mediaeval Christian and Asiatic artists did not observe; they were required to be what they would represent, whether in motion or at rest"; and once again, in the

same volume, *Why Exhibit Works of Art?*, "What do we mean by 'invention'? The entertainment of ideas; the intuition of things as they are on higher than empirical levels of reference."

To interpret the thoughts of another is inevitably to court error. Happily, what Coomaraswamy said needs no mediator, for his was not a personal utterance or one of mere ephemeral importance: he was in the great exegetical tradition: he was himself "enter-taining ideas", and transmitting traditional wisdom which he believed to be truth. And what he was saying to us is this: We are all One under the sun; creation is timeless, instantaneous and eternal; man is a vessel of the spirit. Our highest duty is to know the will of the Creator and to be joyful in following it: to escape, thus, by earnest effort, the limitations of the vehicle, the accidents of the spirit, the provincialisms of the mind, the distinctions and differences fathered by an undisciplined will upon an uncontrolled imagination. To recollect, and to progress, is not to rest among the products of time and place, but to search for the universal in all; to remember, if we can, what was before we were, the better to know ourselves as we now are. For to know ourselves is to recognize the infinite within us; within us all, both in our neighbor and in the ultimate dweller at the ends of the earth. And to know it, in the Indian manner, as one's self, is to love it, in the Christian manner, as one's self; for there is nothing that is, or can be, dearer than the self. The soul, as Plato said, is immortal, and able to sustain all good and all evil; and as we strive to become always that which we know ourselves potentially to be, so do we reach and produce that part of perfection which we are permitted

to attain and to utter. That is what Coomaraswamy taught us.

And what does all this mean for India, the land of his birth, the land to which he had hoped to return for the last years of his life? It means that those in the West who have listened to his voice can learn to look upon the foreign without wishing to change it into something like themselves; for they will see in Eastern symbols the same living spirit that is in the round earth and the blue sky and in the mind of man; and it means that those who have listened in the East can know the foreign without scorning it, for they, likewise, will have learned that the external can be transcended, and they will understand that the West, too, in its own strange ways, is struggling upward to that one same summit where all contraries are resolved. It is consistent with this universal doctrine which he taught, that Coomaraswamy never wished to be praised for distinction of any worldly sort, except in that he may have been distinguished from many modern historians and critics of art as being consistently opposed, on reasoned, traditional grounds, to any doctrine of "art for art's sake," and to any merely sensitive appreciation of art which does not consider the intention of the artist and the inspiration which is implicit in him and explicit in his work; and except in that he was distinguished from most critics of life in making constant reference to eternal principles which he had made his own, not, of course, by inventing them, but by subscribing to them. His personality was submerged in his work: just as, in his writing on art, he always maintained that art should clearly and unmistakeably be a manifestation of some form of the eternal, and, by definition, therefore, be something infinitely greater

than the mere personality of the artist. His work was, and is, the man.

For some in the West, it is not too much to say that he restored to life the meaning which in the blind confusion of a wholly externalized existence, whether in the aimless excitement of the market-place, or in the barren passivity of the college cloister, or in the random activity of the laboratory, had been disregardingly passed by, or despairingly abandoned, or, in the finality of nihilism, denied. He restored that meaning by raising in men, as the poet Blake said, a vision of the infinite. To those of us who have read a little in the Indian scriptures, it seems particularly fitting that light should have come to us once again out of the East; and we are grateful that these rays should have been so clearly transmitted through the fine mind, the transfigured wisdom, and the gentle sympathy of Ananda Coomaraswamy.

*suryam caksur gachatu vatam atma dyam ca  
gacha prthivim ca dharmana  
apo va gacha yadi tatra te hitam osadhisu prati  
tistha sariraih.*

## ONE OF THE GREATEST MINDS OF THE AGE.

(Dr. G. P. Malalasekera of the University of Ceylon,  
Colombo, in a Broadcast Talk.)

Exactly three weeks ago, on Friday, August 22, in this very room, I was attempting to give some idea of the greatness of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy and his work and trying to express in words my own deep sense of homage to a man who had been described as one of the greatest minds of the age. On that very day, in various parts of the world, celebrations were being held in his honour and messages were being



Ceylon — the beautiful homeland of  
Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy.



despatched, felicitating him on the attainment of his 70th birthday and wishing him long life and happiness. Little did we dream then that less than a month later we should be mourning his death and the world deprived of a man of outstanding genius who had laboured hard and long to draw humanity together by bonds of sympathy and understanding.

Coomaraswamy was born in Ceylon but except for a period of three years when he lived here and except for two brief visits he paid to the Island after that, the rest of his life he spent abroad, more than 30 years of it in the U.S.A. Yet he was deeply attached to Lanka and her people and, on occasion, proudly spoke of Ceylon as his Motherland. In recent letters, he had expressed the hope that he would be able to end his days near the Himalayas, at the foot of Mount Kailasa, the abode of the Lord Shiva whose dance was to Coomaraswamy the allegorical representation of the never-ending creative activity of the Universe.

When it was suggested to him that he should not fail to visit Ceylon before he retired to the Abode of Snows, he had replied half seriously, half banteringly, "Well, may be, if Ceylon really wants me."

He wasn't sure when he wrote that, of what kind of feelings the people of Ceylon had for him. It must have been a great pleasure to him, therefore, to have had a few days before his death unmistakable evidence of the genuine affection in which his own countrymen held him and of the pride they felt in his achievements in the field of international scholarships. He had the rare distinction of having been a prophet who was not without honour in his native land. It is a great consolation to think that he lived long enough to have had full details of the celebrations held in the University

of Ceylon on the eve of his 70th birthday at which men and women of all walks of life gathered together in many hundreds to pay him spontaneous tribute.

In honouring him we were honouring ourselves. Coomaraswamy was cast in too great a mould to belong exclusively to any particular country or race; he was truly a citizen of the world. He was aptly described as possessing a myriad-minded intellect, comparable, perhaps, to that of Leonardo de Vinci, in its universal interests. His researches were world-wide and all-embracing, ranging from the philology of at least a dozen languages to music and archaeology, from the ancient metaphysics of Greece and India to the most modern problems of politics and sociology. He was an artist who made the whole world his canvas and presented to his fellow-men the picture of mankind struggling to find itself. As an admirer recently put it, he devoted his energies consistently and tirelessly to the rediscovery of truth and to an exposition of the principles by which cultures rise and fall. Unlike the politician and reformer, who win or lose their little fight and at most achieve a page in a history-book, Coomaraswamy gave his whole life to the one abiding cause in the world, the one increasing purpose, the purpose of knowledge and truth. It is an endless quest and with no material rewards, save perhaps the consciousness of having toiled honestly.

To this quest he brought to bear one of the greatest intellects of the time. For, in him were combined many remarkable qualities in a very remarkable degree—a power of industry that was unsurpassed, a gift for balanced judgment that was at once acute and penetrating, and an honesty and a sincerity that could never be questioned. To these was added an eloquence

that entitles his writings to be placed among the great achievements of English prose. There is no meretricious adornment in his writing, hardly an excessive word. His argument is close-reasoned and compact as though fashioned in the brain of a master. Coupled with these qualities was a modesty that prevented him from presenting personal ideas and putting forward novel theories.

The mere bulk of his work which he has produced would compel respect by its very voluminousness. A bibliography published five years ago listed over 500 works, some of them books containing several hundreds of pages each. Others were articles, reviews and critical essays, all marked by deep learning. This number was greatly added to during the last five years of his life. The marvel grows when one analyses a single page of his writings, with its closely packed materials often drawn from a dozen sources in five or six languages, with numerous references. One is forced to ask by what miracle he managed to fit twenty-four months into his year. Other scholars may have equalled this amount of toil but Coomaraswamy possessed the kind of genius, which in spite of Carlyle goes so rarely with the infinite capacity for taking pains, the desire for meticulous accuracy. In the statement of his views he displayed a boldness and a grasp which put him among the great pioneers, yet his vision was so far-reaching that one wonders at the power of his eye to adjust itself to the microscopic focus which so much of his work demanded.

Coomaraswamy was deeply steeped in the lore of his own people, the Hindus, and he firmly believed in the teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita that man reaches perfection by his loving devotion to his own work.

"More resplendent," says the Gita, "is one's own duty (*sva-dharma*) however imperfectly fulfilled than that of another however well done. One's natural task should never be forsaken, whatever its defects; every business is involved in defects, as fire is involved in smoke" Coomaraswamy's motto was that of Jacob Boehme.

"Whoe'er thou art, that to this work art born,  
A chosen task thou hast, howe'er the world  
may scorn."

He regarded as his task his *dharma*, the rediscovery for his fellowmen the old truths that enabled men to live in peace and happiness. He sought to bring about an integration of mankind and a unity amongst men not through politics and economics but through wisdom and philosophy. He held that if we left out the so-called modernistic and individual philosophies of today, and considered only the traditions of the great philosophers down the ages, we should find in them a commonly accepted body of first principles, a common universe of discourse, providing us with the necessary basis for communication, understanding and agreement and so, for effective co-operation in the application of commonly accepted spiritual values to the solution of contingent problems of organisation and conduct. "As for myself" he says in one of these rare passages where he indulges in the use of the first person, "*I will only say that no day passes in which I do not read the Scriptures and the works of the great philosophers of all ages so far as they are accessible to me in modern languages and in Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. I am wholly convinced that there is one truth that shines through them all in many shapes, a truth greater in glory by far than can be circumscribed*

by any creed or confined by the walls of any church or temple.”

Most of Coomaraswamy's writings were devoted to the interpretation of what he called the traditional philosophy of life in terms of the function of art in human society. It was his view that if civilisation is to be saved the value of all human activity must be determined by a true union of beauty and utility, of significance and aptitude. That, according to him, would be possible only in a co-operative society of free and responsible “craftsmen”—using the term to include all those engaged in any kind of work whatsoever—a vocational society in which men are free to be concerned with the good of the work to be done and are individually responsible for its quality.....

If there was any single quality in Coomaraswamy's character that stood out, it was the stupendous courage with which he stated his views and his refusal to compromise with his convictions. He was a doughty fighter but now he has laid aside his sword, which was the pen that he wielded with such facility and such mastery. The greatest Ceylonese of his generation is dead; he has gone into the shadows and into silence. But his work remains to inspire coming generations and to illumine their paths. The bodies of men decay, says the Buddha, but their name lives on. Ananda Coomaraswamy has left behind him a noble example, a fragrant memory, a light to guide the steps of those that come after.

“Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail

Or knock the breast.....

Nothing but well and fair,

And what may quiet us in a death so noble.”

To famous men the whole world is their sepulchre.

## IN MEMORIAM

## ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY

*(Mrs. Gretchen Warren, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.)*

It is difficult adequately to describe a man who, obedient to rarest talents, and with a profound religious attitude in their use, spent a life-time in arduous study. His days were proliferations of search into almost every human culture from humble to august. He loved nature and understood the often deep significance to those cultures of the mysterious operations of natural law which surround mankind. His early botanical and geological learning was never satisfied by mere science, but reverently sought the essential relation of the visible world to the Invisible. This universality, this growing sense of unity, illumined and enriched his religious belief. In the words of his loved Plotinus, the Cosmos, "set him thinking, overtaken with awe, 'If this be the image, what must be the Original?'"

His immense scholarship was always accessible; and his extraordinary memory so organized that almost any question put to him was at once met by relevant learning generously shared. Added to this was his human side; his home life harmonized and his labors made easier not only by his noble and highly gifted life-companion but by the devotion of his son, and the secure sense that above all else both desired to walk beside him on the austere path to spiritual truth. He felt profound compassion for today's world of spiritual bewilderment and educational hunger, because he knew so well the true remedy and the true nourishment. He knew that "the turning of the eye

of the soul to the Light" with faith in the Presence of God, expressed in their different forms by every religious creed, is the only creative solution for human problems, the only food, the only way to the good life. It is that constant reference to the Eternal, that inner "participation" which, in the wild confusions of materialism and ignorance, alone kindle and strengthen the soul.

In our chaotic days his fervent and dedicated life, his hopes, his worship, flowed together in his writings with a power which seemed an offering to all humanity; as if in setting down each history of a culture, each comment upon a broken or sanctified life, his own longing and veneration were revealed, his plea to the world to find its true chart, its true spiritual compass. Again the sublime words of Plotinus might have been his own: "Whatsoever is yet prisoned in darkness labor to release it, until that day when the glory of virtue as of a God shall flame upon thee. Is not all thy soul gathered into vision? For to this eye and none but this, the Great Beauty is made visible."

His human presence is gone, but still left to us are his writings with their recorded ages of man's struggle upward: his ceaseless longing for revelation, and the love of God. These living histories wait for all who turn from the sickness of a superficial life to seek its cure in the inner world: seek for what is indestructible—namely that sacred Wisdom which, to the long centuries of human questioning, gives its divine and unvarying reply.

## ANANDA K. COMMARASWAMY.

(*H.E. Mr. Asaf Ali, Governor of Orissa, Cuttack, India*).

I came to know of Dr. Coomaraswamy in 1913 in England first through his books and then personally. Even in those far away days he was an acknowledged and highly respected authority on Indian Art. His writings reflected a deeply contemplative mind and his exposition of Indian Art was inspired by a devotional spirit, and a delicate and sensitive assessment of aesthetic values. His was a mind opulent with fine perceptions of Beauty in all its divine aspects. In his last days in America he was a centre of calm radiation of the philosophy of art.

## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Prof. H. H. Rowley, The University, Manchester*).

For the wide range of Dr. Coomaraswamy's learning and the nobility of his spirit I had a very high regard. Few can have been more ready to learn from whatever source knowledge came, and everything he wrote was marked by the catholicity of his understanding and sympathy. His death was a sore blow to scholarship in the wide field he had made his own. It was never my privilege to meet him, but he kindly sent me a number of his publications, which I always read with immense profit as well as with real pleasure.

LET ME FOLD MY HANDS IN THE ANJALI  
HE TAUGHT ME.

(*Miss La Meri, New York*)

What can I say of him—the great man whose knowledge was so wide and so deep, whose influence



**Mr. Sarkis Katchadourian, Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani, Miss La Meri  
and Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy.**

was so catholic and so telling? I can only write of his invaluable contribution to the dance of India and to contemporary dancers.

I doubt if he was fully aware of his position in the dance-world. Certainly he had no such thing in mind when he published his *Mirror of Gesture and Dance of Shiva*. The latter work I bought before ever I left the States the first time, reading with a mind as innocent of Eastern philosophy as any other typical American schoolgirl. But the book stayed with me and I turned to it again and again seeking to understand its meaning.

In Paris in 1931 I met Uday Shankar; and in him saw for the first time the living dance of India. I begged him to teach me, but, although we became good friends, he refused me, saying he did not teach. But he gave to me his own copy of the *Mirror of Gesture*.

"Here is my teacher," he said, "Let him be yours."

And so it was. I studied long the two books, and at last I created my first Indian dance. I showed it to Shankar to approve or reject. This dance I took to India with me, performing it in Madras, in Bombay, in Calcutta, in many smaller cities between these capitals. And everywhere it was enthusiastically accepted. The *Evening News of India* wrote: "The ubiquitous sari of the South Indian dancing girl, with bells on her feet and golden waist band to match and hair plaited to a finish in pucca *devadasi* style are scenes to conjure with.

No wonder this number drew repeated encores from the audience, and the artist was forced to repeat it. "Lasyanatana" is a popular nautch theme and the rendering of the gavili by the orchestra with *mridanga*

effect was good. The orchestration and synchronization were complete when the artiste completed the number to the 'tha-thi-nga-na-thom' finish."

Is not this strange and wonderful? That this great man with the strength and clarity of his work should create a dance in a dancer he had never seen?

Returning from studies in India, I wrote a small book on the gesture language of the dance. I should not have dared to approach *gurudev* Coomaraswamy; but the one who made the photos for my book journeyed to Boston with the manuscript.....and the great one agreed to write an Introduction! This brought about a correspondence between us, his end of it conducted entirely by means of cryptic postcards—everyone of which I have cherished. He looked over (and corrected) my entire manuscript. He would not have linked his name with any work he did not thoroughly know: he respected too much the land and the art he represented.

I shall never forget my fear the first time he saw me perform dances of India! There is no one whose opinion I value so highly, since I knew him to be a completely objective critic. His approval of my work has given me strength and courage to go on when I have met with the bitter criticism and indifference of lesser minds.

On one occasion Pearl Buck, founder and leader of the East and West Association, invited Dr. Coomaraswamy to spend one day for India in New York. It was my great good fortune to be selected to share the day with him. In the morning we spoke to a large gathering of teachers; in the late afternoon we broadcast over a coast-to-coast net work. Records were

run off of that broadcast; my copies are among my great treasures.

What, indeed, can I say of the great man? I can only speak for the dancers and lovers of India's dance in all its manifestations. He was our leader, however unaware his studies may have kept him of that strange, unasked leadership. His inspiration and knowledge have gone out to all America; nay, to all the world. For even I have lectured on Indian dance in some twenty-odd countries; and in all my lectures I quote him continually. If I am, in some small way, responsible for understanding audiences for Indian dance in my own country; the glory is his, and I am only a mirror to reflect the light of his erudition.

I am, indeed, too humble a one to offer tribute to his memory. Let me, then, my heart full overflowing, fold my hands in the *Anjali* he taught me, and lay one fragrant flower among the many radiant garlands at his feet.

### COOMARASWAMY, THE HUSBANDMAN

(Mr. Joseph Epes Brown, S. W. Harbor, Maine, U.S.A.)

It is not easy to write on the "personal aspect" of Dr. Coomaraswamy, the greatest thing that those who were close to him learned is the unimportance of the individual (the accident), in relation to the Supreme Person (the Essence) Who is everything.

Ananda Coomaraswamy was one who had before "death" died to the individual, and was living constantly and intensely in the Spirit. Indeed he was fond of quoting often the magnificent words from Shams-i-Tabriz: "Know that I am harsh for good, not

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from rancour or spite. Whoever enters saying “ ‘Its I, smite him in the face.’ Or “his own” less well known but very precise “*Contra-Cartesium*”:

“That I can think is proof Thou art,  
The only In-dividual, from dividuality  
My feigned individuality depends.”

This reminds one of John (VIII, 28). “I do nothing of myself”; to which Ananda Coomaraswamy has added: “ ‘I do, or ‘I think, is an in-fatuation.”

For so long as the soul is in the body it is not destroyed, but it is to be purified, expanded, and transformed by the Divine Presence. Thus it is that “our” being and its actions reflect the inner condition of the soul, and the important relationship between metaphysics and manufacture (*manu-factura*, hand-making) which Ananda Coomaraswamy constantly pointed out to us. Whose soul is pure creates beautiful things, while the soul that is dark makes things that are ugly (hence the gloomy character of the “modern world.”) From this point of view we may be justified in making a few remarks on form that has been transformed through participation in the Truth. Indeed this man’s life was dedicated to the interpretation of the significance of forms not excluding those of pots and pans. He taught us to know that a vessel is made to hold water, but both the vessel and the water have their meanings and the container ought to be both *pulcher et aptus*.

Those who had the privilege of visiting Ananda Coomaraswamy at his home quickly realized another of his many facets, he was a botanist and husbandman of the first order. The grounds about his home were covered with magnificent plants, many of which came from remote parts of the world. At all times of the

year his house was full of blooming plants. There is a small green house off his living room where he would often be found tending his plants and seedlings with the greatest care and concentration. His knowledge of them and their Latin names was as thorough as are the foot-notes to his writings. One wondered how with so much of his time devoted to his work, researches—prolific writings of such profundity and generous correspondence, he was yet able to give so much of his time to flowers. It would seem as if the raising and tending of beautiful things was a necessary part of his nature. Caring for these things was his way of participating in the Great Spirit, and this activity was for him a “support.” He was not a mere gardener but a husbandman. This became clear to me one day when we were walking in his garden.....he would inspect the smallest plant with great interest, as if rejoicing without words over the sublimity of the Creator’s art.

We discussed Philo’s work *On Husbandry*, this helped me to realize what significance the world of plants had for him (n.b. Neophyte, Gr. New Plant) he was helping the Creator to raise his crop. That is how I learned that any garden is a veritable Universe, and that all the growing things are the sum totality of all possible manifested forms. Indeed the Universe and the enactment of all the Eternal Truths may be seen in a single flower as one observes its form and considers its complete life cycle. I further learned that one who tends growing things is himself an image of the Gardener who cares for and sustains the whole Universe. Further, Gardener and garden represent Adam, or the condition of the Primordial Man in the *Krita Yuga*, the Hindu Golden Age.

Partly by Ananda Coomaraswamy's example and partly by explanation I came to know that for this man the garden, or even a handful of earth is the image of the soul of man. Where there is neglect weeds grow and the soil is unfruitful. One cultivates the earth (one's self) to pull up weeds of ignorance that even the smallest seed may grow.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's writings have sown many seeds the world over, seeds that are bound to take root grow and bear fruit, by the grace of God.

When I think of Ananda Coomaraswamy, I see neither the great art curator, the scholar, the author and lecturer, I see him in the garden and think of him as a Noah, the husbandman *par excellence*, who during his life tended his garden well, and planted good seed, the growth of which cannot be hindered because he is "with-drawn."

It is perhaps not mere chance that he came away from his study and into the garden to see his flowers and plants and the work done there before taking leave from us.

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## A SIDELONG GLANCE

(*Mr. Max R. Grossman, Boston, U.S.A.*)

It could very well be, a century from now, that all the world will be reading and marvelling at the concepts of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy. There will be, at that time—as there is now in certain circles—a feeling of surprise that the world of the first half of the Twentieth Century should have been unaware of the titan of the intellect who lived and worked in Boston for the benefit of all the world.



Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at work in his garden  
at Needham, Massachusetts, U.S.A. (1934)  
—Photo by Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy.

As nearly as I can make out, there is still great wonderment that Shakespeare's genius was largely unrecognized by his contemporaries. This is regarded as odd because his plays were successful at the box office—and were then forgotten. The disinterest in Shakespeare was so complete that the basic facts of his life and career have been obliterated. The thousands of volumes written about him have been based largely on conjecture and surmise.

Why was Shakespeare ignored by his contemporaries? Why were the two billion persons who shared a moment in time with Coomaraswamy largely unaware of his achievements? These two questions are not identical but, judging from the tributes recorded in a previous volume\* about the Boston scholar, they have much in common. I cannot answer the questions. I can only take the word of some of his contemporaries that Dr. Coomaraswamy was a giant. I can, however, ask the questions. And perhaps, in telling what I know of Dr. Coomaraswamy, I can provide a footnote for a future biographer who will write a book entitled, "The Neglected Genius of the Twentieth Century—A. K. Coomaraswamy."

Among those who neglected the scholar, you can certainly list me. And among those who neglected me, you can certainly list the scholar. The arrangement was mutually happy. Dr. Coomaraswamy never aroused the Boswell in me. I am quite positive that he never gave any but the most passing thought to me.

Our first meeting was accidental.....The editor of the paper for which I was working (the Boston Post,

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\*Homage to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: a 70th Birthday Volume edited by S. Durai Raja Singam (1947).

circa 1935) handed me some photographic prints and said, "Here are some interesting pictures. The photographer is asking \$50 for each print—which is an outrage—but perhaps there is a story in a lady who thinks she is good enough to command \$50 for a print."

I looked at the pictures—and thought they were wonderful. I was quite convinced, however, that they were not worth \$50 because that was very nearly what I received for a week's pay. (An odd standard of evaluation, what?) I telephoned to the photographer, Zlata Llamas, (Luisa Coomaraswamy) and asked to see her.

She made an appointment for several days later and I appeared at her Beacon Street house on a mid-afternoon. Miss Llamas gave me a cup of tea, showed me some of her prints (which I admired) and invited me to her dark room in the basement. We entered the tiny cubicle. She turned on the red anti-exposure light and began printing negatives, chatting cheerily all the while. Miss Llamas was—and is—an enthusiast and even if her pictures had not been remarkable I would have thought so, for such is contagion.

I don't know how long we were in the dark room but, of a sudden, all the sensitized paper was put away, and she turned on a white, daylight, electric light.

She opened the door to the now glaring darkroom and motioned for me to leave the tiny chamber. I stumbled into the cellar—and found myself confronted by an enormous figure whose outlines I could barely make out. I was, to put it meekly, astonished.

"Oh," said Miss Llamas, "my husband. Dr. Coomaraswamy, may I present Mr. Grossman of the Boston Post."



Dr. and Mrs. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy in 1917

".....do," said the doctor, "Dinner."

He turned and went upstairs.

"When the doctor wants dinner," said Mrs. Coomaraswamy, "he wants dinner. It has been so very pleasant. Do call again."

After I had written an article about her photographic genius—a full page, I believe, illustrated with her photographs (for which we paid nothing!)—Miss Llamas invited me to tea again. I think she may have wanted to be certain she got her pictures back.

We had tea again. Miss Llamas talked about her husband.

"He gets along beautifully with simple people," she said. "Unlearned people, I mean. Those whose minds have been unclouded by the folklore of our so-called Western culture. They understand him perfectly. The handyman around the house, I mean. Or the cobbler. Or almost anyone."

"Really learned people understand him, of course. And he understands them. But with what you might call middle-brows, there is no point of contact. It would be interesting to see where he places you."

She laughed merrily.

At that moment, Dr. Coomaraswamy walked in.

"Ananda," cried his wife, startled. "Home so early?"

"I made up my mind that I had had enough of that museum (the Boston Museum of Fine Arts) for today. How do you do?" he said to me. "You wrote that article about my wife."

There was no indication whether he thought the piece to have been either good or bad.

"Are you all right, dear?" Miss Llamas asked. Then, as an aside to me, "It is usually so hard to get

him to leave the museum that I am concerned about his health."

"There are times when a person dislikes that which he likes most," said the doctor. "I have had enough museum for today. Is there no tea for me?"

The doctor turned to me.

"Do you like fishing?" he asked.

Mrs. Coomaraswamy looked up from the tea urn and grinned at me.

"Not a bit," I replied.

"I find fishing to be the most wonderful of all—of all mental exercises," the doctor said. "I like to catch the fish, too."

Then followed an hour's chat about the joys of fishing, the conversation being carried largely by the good doctor and his wife.

Of a sudden, he was gone. No farewell. No excuses. No apologies. Just—exit.

"The doctor has an idea," Mrs. Coomaraswamy said. "He is always like that. Always and everywhere."

She thought, apparently, that I might have been hurt. I wasn't, of course. I was, if anything, envious, for here was a man who, having lost interest in the proceedings, left to undertake something which did interest him.

We sat for a few minutes longer.

"How did he classify me?" I asked.

"The doctor never classifies people," Mrs. Coomaraswamy said. "Never. Never! He likes people. You are still concerned because he left. I tell you, if you had been the president of Harvard College he still would have left. He does that all the time."

"The doctor," I replied, "seems to be able to live his own life—completely and fully. I think that is

wonderful. I think also that it is you who make that possible. That is even more wonderful. I tell you I didn't mind in the least his walking out. I envy him. I wish I had the courage to do what I please when I wish to do it. No, I am curious to know where he has placed me. It wasn't, I am certain, among the high-brows. It would be fun to be included among the low-brows."

"I think," said Mrs. Coomaraswamy, "that he has listed you as a personal friend of mine. He has assigned you to me, exclusively."

"A wonderful idea," I said.

We both laughed.

Mrs. Coomaraswamy was right, of course. My wife and I became close friends of Miss Llamas. I saw the doctor many times, of course. (When they moved to Needham, I saw him much less frequently.)

And these are the solemn facts: The doctor never said anything to me which I regarded as vital. I am quite certain that I never said anything to the doctor which interested him. It was a mutually pleasant relationship.

Once I heard him lecture in Boston. His talk was straight-forward, non-technical, enjoyable. The scholars in the audience and the fairly large (for Boston) gathering of Indians hung on his every word. I heard him speak again at the centennial of the founding of Wheaton College in Norton, Mass. He was most impressive and his comments were most interesting. One day I read in a magazine that he was listed among the 10 great living American essayists.

He had told me once that it was impossible to understand India without having been in that country.

I found the few articles which he had written and which I had attempted to read—to be baffling. This, perhaps I should add, was at a time when somebody had said that there were only a dozen persons in the world who understood Einstein. Somehow I grouped Coomaraswamy with Einstein and concluded, wisely enough, that since I was one who would never understand Einstein, why therefore.....Q.E.D.

My work demanded contemporarity. I once attempted to discuss American politics with him. He was disinterested. Hitler. No memorable response. The doctor looked at everything from the perspective of history. It was not, however, a backward glimpse for, to him, surely, everything was prologue. He lived, I am certain, in the future—and what had happened and what was happening was shaping the future. But was the future to be worth while? Was it worth fighting for? I think, despite his seemingly perpetual introspection, that the doctor was an optimist. But here again, I speak without knowledge. Let the scholars determine that.

Only one person really knew the doctor—or as much of the doctor as he ever permitted anyone to know. (I don't mean by that that he was secretive. I do mean that no great person is fully revealed, either to himself or to anyone else.)

This much I do understand: Luisa Coomaraswamy is a great and noble lady. If the doctor will emerge, as many are saying, as one of the great figures of world philosophy, then the world will owe a great deal to his wife. It was she who made it possible for him to work. It was she who absorbed the problems, for him, of every day life.

She knew he detested publicity. She knew he was totally disinterested in establishing an "identity" for himself. She balanced his accounts, for matters arithmetic were beyond him. She did research for him. She read his proofs. She read his mind, too.

In so doing, she became a scholar herself.

.....I have contributed little to the picture of Dr. Coomaraswamy but it is possible that, a century from now, this fragmentary glimpse of the scholar's home life will be interesting. What would we give for a similar picture of Shakespeare's life?

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### A TRIBUTE.

(Sri K. Chandrasekharan, M.A., B.L., Madras.)

A *rasika* is born and not made, even as a poet is. Maybe, in the case of the *rasika*, his genius differs from that of a creative artist. But that difference must, if at all, exist in degree alone and not in kind.

An observation like the above one holds good with an art critic of the calibre of the late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. For, judging by adventitious circumstances alone, a person of the renowned Doctor's birth and up-bringing, could not have easily possessed the capacity, which he showed in such abundant measure all his life, for appreciation of Indian Art. His father was a Ceylonese and his mother of British origin. His education was begun and completed in England. The rest of his years were practically spent in Europe and America, the latter being his adopted country during the last thirty years, till his death in September 1947. A savant to the core of his being, his astonishing interest in the study of Oriental arts like Indian

sculpture, architecture, painting, music, dance and handicrafts, has earned for him an imperishable name, which is perhaps second to none in the sphere of interpretation and exposition of all that is best and noblest in the culture of the East, and particularly of India.

Still one feels a wonder how this scholar spending the best part of his life away from India could have divined the glory of Ind, that is her great art and culture. Well, let us listen to himself before trying to find out for ourselves what lay behind the wealth of scholarship he brought to bear upon his numerous writings. He writes: "Hindu writers say that the capacity to feel beauty (to taste *rasa*) cannot be acquired by study, but is the reward of merit gained in a past life; for many good men and would-be historians of art have never perceived it."<sup>1</sup> Those that are familiar with the stuff of which he was made, will unhesitatingly agree that his amazing penetration into the nuances of Indian Art must be the result of the *vasanas* of a previous birth and nothing else.

Moreover, it is not in one field of knowledge alone that his capacious intellect perceived clearly things for itself or mastered the intricacies of a subject. Indeed, studies pertaining to a dozen subjects and countries, ranging from ancient to modern times, attracted him, and the outcome was his remarkable output, in the shape of high-class books on the history and tendencies of the art of many countries, with beautiful plates to illustrate his points, as well as pamphlets and monographs on special occasions that demanded his

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1. *The Dance of Shiva*, p. 43.

considered views upon human problems facing the worn-out world of today. And yet, what amount of precision marks all that he wrote! One can judge of the level of his performances from what we get from him by way of quotations from Sanskrit texts that achieve a rare illumination at his hands. His deep knowledge of Greek and Latin too aid him in the special task he chose for himself. Still, nowhere in his style do we perceive any desire for conscious effects or display of erudition. Rather, his expositions gain considerably by the apt footnotes and adequate extracts he was able to gather with accuracy. And in case there is any difficulty felt by the reader in reading him, it must be due to the reader's own defective approach to the subject or the absence of a clear understanding needed to voyage forth with the author in a wonder-world that is Indian Art.

Years back when pseudo-critics and uninformed pedants like Vincent Smith, Maskell, Birdwood and Archer condemned the very features of vitality, infinity and repose as exemplified in the many-armed or many-headed images we have in our hieratic art, there was only a dumb acquiescence in all that they said on the part of our so-called educated men. Western education spoilt so much the first few generations of university-educated men and women in India that they hardly thought of our heritage in the arts as anything but the vestiges of an unrefined or unformed sense of art in our ancients. Everything pertaining to our culture and philosophy stood at a disadvantage by the side of the amazing discoveries of the West in science. But things were not allowed to remain thus for long. Soon there arose, from the ranks of Westerners, art critics of the type of E. B. Havell, who had the vision

to perceive and proclaim to Indians themselves what phenomenal folly it was to neglect such great traditions as had once infused *Bhakti* in artists and inspired them to capture through imagination the undying glories of Ajanta and Ellora. Among Indians also champions appeared like Sri Aurobindo who carried on a crusade against the traducers of our ancient culture. But a regular school was needed to revive our arts and to teach what was gradually vanishing from our midst. The Tagores, Rabindranath and his cousins Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, inaugurated the Bengal School and ere long there was a stir in our hearts to understand what goes by the name of Indian Art. Still nothing could be so effective as a deep study of the basic rules of Indian Art and the rare philosophy behind all creative efforts in the land of the incomparable temples and *stupas*. Therefore it is that a tribute to Ananda Coomaraswamy for the inestimable services he rendered in fostering an appreciation of our relics becomes all the more essential in order to retain the spirit of such a revival, especially during times when India has become a free nation and no longer needs others to help her in the reconstruction of her future.

His writings abound in first-hand information and correct sources of historical data regarding the phases through which art has passed in our long history. To him we owe the first portfolio of *Selected Examples of Indian Art*—a collection of forty-two plates comprising representative types of painting and sculpture of more than one school, recognised and classified as such by savants working in the field. In addition, his wide travels in all parts of the world, as well as his intensive study of Indian handicrafts, urged him to specify

in one of his early books, *Art and Swadeshi*, the need for a new orientation in our outlook and the preservation of what still remains with us after all the ravages of our contact with the West. Apart from that, he has given in that brochure the underlying ideas of Indian painting and sculpture with an exhortation to us to return to the past, at any rate in the sphere of fine arts.

His numerous other books require perhaps a special attempt at a careful classification and analysis according to both chronological data and subject matter. But we cannot in a brief compass do better than stress some of the salient ideas born of his great mind in the interpretation of our culture. *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, published so early as 1913 and containing two-hundred and twenty-five illustrations, is a comprehensive treatise treating adequately of our sculpture, painting, architecture and handicrafts. To prove its merit as a handbook for the earnest student of Indian Art, we can only quote one or two passages from it. In understanding the history and character of Indian Art he would wish us first to know that, "The Hindus do not regard the religious, aesthetic and scientific stand-points as necessarily conflicting, and in all their finest work, whether musical, literary or plastic, those points of view, now-a-days so sharply distinguished, are inseparably united."<sup>2</sup> A more healthy plea for an all-embracing concept of Art we do not find anywhere else, except perhaps in some of Tagore's essays on our culture. Again, let us listen to his elevating explanation for the absence of artists' names on all the great historic

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2. *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 17.

relics we still have left us: "The absence of names in the history of Indian Art is a great advantage to the historian of Art, for he is forced to concentrate all his attention upon their work, and its relation to life and thought as a whole, while all temptation to anecdotal criticism is removed."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, we pause to admire the tradition and belief which was never concerned to leave to posterity the vestiges of a personal vanity!

The collection of essays under the title of *The Dance of Shiva* bears out his critical appreciation of the great themes that have inspired our artists in sculpture, image-making, music, etc. The birthright of uniqueness which we possess in our arts, he would not like us to surrender for the sake of anything in the world. In his words, "The essential contribution of India, then, is simply her Indianness; her great humiliation would be to substitute or to have substituted for this our character (*Svabhava*) a cosmopolitan veneer, for, then indeed she must come before the world empty-handed."<sup>4</sup> It is not too late in the day if we, who are on the threshold of a new era of glory for our Motherland, should try to imbibe the spirit behind his utterances and try, in a remote way at least, to follow his timely admonition.

Let us turn to what he says of Indian music. Everybody today is fond of music, and, judging by the numbers that visit music performances in our country, we cannot but view with pride the enormous interest ordinary people show in such an intricate and delicate science as Carnatic music. But the fact cannot be screened from our view that so many that listen to

3. *The Arts and Crafts of India*. p. 22.

4. *The Dance of Shiva*. p. 1.

such a type of music are not reflective enough to know what exactly accounts for the unflagging interest that generations have evinced in this art. Now let us hear Ananda Coomaraswamy upon the fundamental quality of our music that is responsible for this phenomenon. "The Indian music is essentially impersonal; it reflects an emotion and an experience which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of a single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation, and it is passionate without any loss of serenity.<sup>5</sup> How many, we ask, could have revealed the essence, as this great Doctor does, of what we term as musical experience, which alone produced such outpourings in a Saint like Thyagayya, whose music as regards its notes may be even limited but as an expression of truth is infinite? We know our music has an elaborate theory and a technique difficult to master; still we say, in its totality of appeal, it is not an art but life itself.

Of his *Transformation of Nature in Art* one cannot easily attempt to describe the merits or defects. For, before one can essay upon that task, one should search one's own mind in order to acquire self-integration of a high order. Some of the most subtle aspects of Hindu theories of art, imagination and sense of beauty are detailed here with a full consciousness of their imperishable underlying truths. Ananda Coomaraswamy feels himself secure in these regions, as the number of Sanskrit texts, upon art and aesthetics in general, have invariably aided him in formulating them and made him an object of marvel even to those

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5. *The Dance of Shiva*. p. 79.

that have spent their whole lives in studies of Sanskrit literature and Oriental arts. To quote one example of his deep penetration into the subject he has chosen, let us turn to him for a while. The word *Sadrśya* in Sanskrit is interpreted by him as follows in relation to art: "What the representation imitates is the idea or species of the thing by which it is known intellectually, rather than the substance of the thing as it is perceived by the senses."<sup>6</sup> Another passage from this valuable work will show us what earnestness he evinced in making us all art-minded as well as sympathetic to Indian Art. "In Western Art, the picture is generally conceived as seen in a frame or through a window, and so brought toward the spectator; but the Oriental image really exists only in our own mind and heart and is thence projected or reflected on to space. The Western presentation is designed as if seen from a fixed point of view, and must be optically possible; Chinese landscape is typically represented as seen from more than one point of view, or in any case, from a conventional, not a real point of view, and here it is not plausibility but intelligibility that is essential."<sup>7</sup> No doubt, to a novice much of what is here may be unintelligible. But that cannot be helped, as in the very nature of things art as conceived by our ancients should never wish to *imitate* nature. Rather, according to them, art should, if at all, imitate nature in copying nothing.

Ananda Coomaraswamy's book *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* is a work of rare value and defies analysis by any reader with a superficial outlook. There is no denying the fact that

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6. *Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 13.

7. *Ibid.* p. 29.



Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy at an early age.

whatever he writes is informed by a religious feeling that his readers, whether few or many, should not be taken into a mere maze of ideas, but taken by the hand along the path trodden by more erudite and ancient writers upon the subject. Yet we find him fresh and genuine in his theories, without losing the thought of the present.

To the end of his days he was found writing periodically upon art and allied subjects that were near his heart. It is true he is not quite so widely known for his services to our country, as some of our great politicians. But that does not detract from the merit of the great impetus he gave to the revival that we are witnessing in the appreciation of our arts. All the same, the past was never an obsession with him. He moved with the times and cautioned his readers against a complete return to our past. What he wants of us Indians is "to understand, to endorse with passionate conviction, and to love what we have left behind," as the only possible foundation for power that we aim at among the nations of the world.

Let us then pay our dutiful homage to the greatest of art-critics that our age has produced. Though separated by the distance of the seas and the oceans, he always thought of India and even felt a longing, towards the close of his life, for peace and rest in a secluded spot on the Tibetan Himalayas. He was a great path-finder and dreamed of many of our present aspirations for the reconstruction of India's future. We cannot think of any analogy for characterising his wonderful work of interpreting Indian Art than the great exploration of the unscalable heights of the Himalayas, whose peaks are not more imposing than they who discovered them first to us.

## HE MADE MANIFEST THE GLORY OF INDIA

*(Rev. John Haynes Holmes, New York.)*

India has much to contribute to mankind in these great days of freedom. In nothing is she richer, and therefore better able to enrich the world, than in the field of art. Here she rivals Greece—shining in the East as Greece shone in the West with the resplendent beauties of her creation.

It was this fact which was discovered and proclaimed by the late lamented Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. More than any other student and teacher of this modern age, he rescued the art work of his country from the blight of mere antiquity as relics of the past, and made it a part of the living influence of the race. He made manifest the glory of India in the higher achievements of her people, and proved that in art, as in philosophy and religion, and now in political statesmanship, this blessed land is among the supreme leaders of humanity.

Doctor Coomaraswamy himself did much to open up a period of renaissance for India. For he was not merely an artist in his own right, but also a philosopher as well. His thought exposed the deeper mysteries of truth, and led straight and sure to religion in its manifest aspects of the divine. Seldom has one man done so much, in so many different ways, for his own people and for mankind. By his labors and utter devotion, and by the unique activities of his own genius, he demonstrated anew the teaching of the immortal poet,

“‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

When surveying the work of such a man as Doctor Coomaraswamy, one is reminded of how superficial are the differences that separate mankind, and how fundamental the likenesses, or rather identities, that make us one. It is in this sense that this great Indian was more than an Indian. He belonged to us all, East and West alike. Therefore, are we all rightly challenged to acclaim his fame, and to do reverence before the shrine of his eternal memory.

### ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY.

(Dr. Benjamin Rowland, Jr., Harvard University U.S.A.)

Dr. Coomaraswamy's life was almost a series of *avatars*. As Goethe once remarked in speaking of a creative personality, he became in the different stages of his life a different being: first a geologist, then a political reformer, later an art historian, and finally an interpreter of the *philosophia perennis* in art.

It would be impossible to enumerate here his many distinguished and definitive contributions to the study of Indian art, music, and the dance. As a model of archaeological accuracy and accuracy of stylistic interpretation, his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927) will probably never be surpassed. Dr. Coomaraswamy's publication in 1934 of *The Transformation of Nature in Art* was the first revelation of a final change in his mode of thinking. Here was presented the complete statement of his conception of traditional art and the relationship of Oriental art and the art of the pre-Renaissance West. This work with its definition of the work of art as an expression of the same first principles that govern traditional society won him a host of followers.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was not an iconologist with an interest in merely tracing the survival of motifs but was entirely concerned with establishing the origin and endurance of concepts that transcend what is generally designated as style. The last decade of his life was devoted to the publication of articles on subjects ranging from Vedic exegesis to condemnation of the American and British systems of colonial exploitation. He never specifically dismissed all art of the post-mediaeval periods: he only condemned and deplored a society in those periods when the concern for man and the material present had replaced reliance on eternal principles and man's last end. Dr. Coomaraswamy never recommended anything remotely resembling a return to outworn tradition in either art or social structure. In one of his last public utterances at the celebration of Indian independence he made it very plain that only a change of heart with an end to understanding the real meaning of the great traditions could make for any change in the evils of our present system: only by such an understanding could we hope to substitute real freedom for frivolity in art, and order for chaos in human society.

Dr. Coomaraswamy will be remembered by his many friends the world over for his unfailing kindness and interest in their researches. Although a forbidding figure to the vulgar, Dr. Coomaraswamy was an exceedingly normal man who had both easily and gracefully established himself in the society that he found in 20th century America. One of the most endearing traits of his character was his devotion to gardening and the art of fishing. Those who attended his services in his beloved garden at Needham will

remember the bird-feeding station that swung in the wind as a kind of symbol that he had food for man and God's little ones as well.

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## A STUDENT'S VIEW OF DR. COOMARASWAMY.

*(Dr. Schuyler Cammann, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.)*

The great truths about art and religion taught by Dr. Coomaraswamy first reached me at second hand, through the brilliant lectures of Professor Benjamin Rowland at Harvard University. They gave me new insights, and I only regretted that I had not heard them before my first years of travel in Asia, rather than after my return.

On several occasions Prof. Rowland urged me to go to Dr. Coomaraswamy with problems of research in Oriental iconography, but I was somewhat diffident about it. After all he was a famous man and a busy one, while I was merely a student. When I finally went to see him at the Boston Museum, I found him very cordial and unassuming, and very willing to take the time to study my problems as presented in a manuscript, before offering some very valuable suggestions. On later visits I found him equally willing to help and advise.

He had little patience with those who came to see him merely to meet him and hear him talk, thus taking him needlessly from his work; but he was always willing to set aside his writing or research for a student who had a serious question, however small.

His later lectures and articles were sometimes very difficult to digest, as he admitted that he was speaking only for those who could understand him; yet I found

him perfectly willing to explain these ideas at greater detail to a student, presenting them in a form more easy to assimilate. And he was always careful to point out, in true humility, that the truths he taught were not his own but part of the great Tradition. He would never take credit for them; even though great credit was due to him for rediscovering them and passing them on to us, for showing their interrelationship in the teachings of prophets and sages of many civilizations, and for demonstrating their applicability in our own day, when we of the modern world have largely forgotten them—to our own great loss.

His memory remains fresh in the minds of all who have known him or have heard him speak; and for posterity it will live on among those who receive his teachings passed on by men like Prof. Rowland, as well as in his own books and articles, which should serve as an inspiration for years to come.

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## ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

### A TRIBUTE.

*(Dr. Arthur Upham Pope, New York).*

Ananda Coomaraswamy was by every count one of the great men of our age. His life-work coincides with one of the critical moments in the history of civilization, when the politically and economically chaotic world was destroying itself with conflicting ambitions, short-sighted parochialism, destructive animosities. He came at a time when communication and transport were developing techniques that shrank the world to a single crowded community, thereby multiplying the dangers of dissension and conflict, also at a time when there was a profoundly felt, and increas-

ing need for more comprehensive sympathies, for an enlarged and deepened spiritual life. Appearances and reality were confused and at odds, and this confusion was reflected in the inner life of individuals as well as the world of action and events. Coomaraswamy's interests, equipment and experience in various ways bridged some of these scattered and antagonistic fragments of what desperately needed to be really One World.

Racially he was both Eastern and Western, by loyalty and affection Eastern. He was trained in Western science, with its rigorous discipline, its objectivity and sense of responsibility to fact and logic, its demand for precision and lucidity of statement. He was at the same time an artist, seeing with penetrating and sympathetic eye the inner quality of the arts of India, of which he was not only the most learned, but likewise the most effective exponent to the West. Furthermore, he was a philosopher, with technical competence, with a capacity for sustained thinking on the profound problems. Finally, he was deeply religious, consciously identified with transcendent values and realities which he understood and revered.

Thus both an Easterner and a Westerner, scientist, artist, philosopher and holy man, he had qualifications and equipment for service of an extraordinary kind in diagnosing cultural maladies and their cures. He was in his later days a merciless analyst of our superficialities and obsessions, our complacent occupation with the trivial and unessential in the world of art and religion. Positively he helped design the spiritual fabric of the needed and destined concord and

cooperation of Mankind in its search for its own appropriate and inherent ends.

The genius of Coomaraswamy lay in his vision of the primary, eternal and universal truths to which all serious and dedicated men could repair for guidance and inspiration; clarifying confusions, providing common goals and substituting needed permanence for the transient and deceptive values.

This vision, more than a revelation, more than a hope, had substance, clarity, and universality. Initiated perhaps by his absorption in the Buddhist doctrine of Compassion, intensified by the breadth of his own experience which made him appreciate more than most the tribulations of his own people, the frustrations of Indian life, the diversion from its own ideals, its relative impotence. But he saw India's problems as world problems. He identified and denounced with calm passion the crude and self-defeating ambitions, the ignorant and selfish standards of a mechanized and acquisitive age, that was even defeating the arrogant and confident West as well as the depressed and suffering East.

He was, thus, all the more sensitive to the neglect of other cultures and individuals which acknowledged same principles that had marked India's ancient greatness, and which he believed universally valid.

Yet his was not the vision of an enthusiast, but also the conclusions of a scholar of magnificent talent, of striking versatility, and of incredible industry. The last time I saw him at work there were eight volumes open on his desk and he was comparing an enormous range of material with the most painstaking thoroughness. He sensed spiritual comradeship throughout the history of all lands and religions, tested their

faiths and his own convictions by rigorous logic. He used an adequate command of a half-dozen languages to demonstrate the universality of Man's dependence on eternal principles. He insisted that there was an age-old, worldwide conviction that mission of art was to reveal the real nature of things, a reality beyond appearance which would help to bring him peace, happiness and well-being.

He put the philosophy of all periods under tribute. Relatively late in life he made heroic efforts to master the philosophy of such difficult thinkers as Plato and Kant—each in itself a life-work. His scientific spirit demanded a systematic and comprehensive mobilization of the deepest thinking on the basic philosophic problems. All this he correlated and reviewed in the light of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He saw in them a confirmation of the characteristic elements in Indian life and thought. For this purpose he was hard at work on the formidable task of a new translation of the Vedas.

He was not content to express opinions, but sought for massive and cogent proof, in such a variety of sources that complete success was impossible for him or any other mortal. Nevertheless, he did come near to fulfilling his impossible ideal, and it gave him the momentum to assail some of the spiritually and artistically demoralizing tendencies in our age. He proposed a drastic revolution in contemporary values and practices. He was the Prophet, appealing once more for disregarded first principles in the light of which our current theories of art seem provincial, superficial, ensnared in dangerous and contagious fallacies. That art could be created for either fame or money seemed to him blasphemous; and he found

equally ignoble the plea for "art for art's sake," which concealed the serious purpose of art to which the greatest artists were uncompromisingly dedicated.

These views brought him into conflict with a highly individualistic age whose immaturities had made a fetish of egotism and self-expression, which he regarded as trivial impertinences. He was just as scornful of art as entertainment. Art was for him a sacrament, a means of disclosing and conveying intrinsic values.

Because he did thus stand out against the trends of the moment, and because he was dealing with difficult and neglected ideas that demanded hard and open minded thinking, his deepest efforts evoked opposition and were victimized by misinterpretation or indifference. Reviewers called him a Mediaevalist who wanted to set back the clock. Such estimates drew from him devastating replies in potent, simple language, slightly condescending rebukes to the childish and wayward.

His sympathy with Indian thought and art, led him to underestimate at times, or misinterpret contributions of other cultures. Indeed, he himself realized that some arts were closed to him. Thus the art of the Islamic Near East seemed to him an art only of entertainment, of pleasant fancy, of ingenuity. Could he have but seen further and deeper, he would have found that in its origins it is a dedicatory and invocational art, and in early forms it had even been, like the art of India, a sacrament. But such limitations of sympathy, natural and almost inevitable though they were, for one so deeply absorbed in a central conviction, brought down on him the wrath of scholars in other fields, who even accused him of

nationalistic bias or of using scholarship for political propaganda.

Within his special field of Indian art, professional art historians had to rely on his knowledge and judgment; but while they accepted his factual information and his aesthetic appraisals, some of them were scornful of his deeper convictions and insights, yet these were the man. These they never understood. More than one scholar in related fields, incompetent or unwilling to make the real effort to understand him, regarded his greatest contributions as nonsense. It was common for such opponents to say that they wanted "facts," not speculation, though none of them showed the faintest comprehension of what a fact is—one of the difficult problems of philosophy—let alone the nature of first principles.

Coomaraswamy was not always happy in his friends. The spiritually starved sensed the depth and beauty of his insight, and sometimes embarrassed him with lush sentimentality; but he was always patient and maintained a noble tranquility, and unfailing sympathy for the sincere searcher.

He spoke in a low tone of voice so that one had sometimes to listen intently to catch all that he was saying. He worked so hard that, in his later years, he was always weary; indeed the contrast between the Coomaraswamy of these last years and the Coomaraswamy whom I first knew was striking. Nearly forty years ago I saw him stride into a drawing-room in smart riding-clothes, on his way to a canter along the San Francisco beaches—tall, lithe, with that perfect poise which never left him; charming, humorous, gentle, but with a flash of power and surety. He had already found his "occupation" in the Shakespearean

sense: he knew pretty much what he wanted to do and be, and he was, though unassumingly, aware of his potentialities. At the end, his white hair, his growing physical weakness, his rather gaunt face and straggly beard hardly recalled the young cavalier. But there was that same quiet assurance, and a deeper conviction of values.

He knew that time was short; he knew that his program was all but impossible; he wanted only two years more to have accomplished what he felt was in him. Should he have undertaken less? Could he have left for others some of his projects? Could he have foregone the exacting labor to disclose some relatively small point in some recondite philosophy which only enriched an established point of view?

It is too soon to assess finally the value of his contribution or the validity of his method. He was out of joint with his time; but his time was fatally out of joint with eternity; and there is no assurance whether in this finite world the cause of the eternal values will prosper or will be extinguished by Man's reckless ignorance and his undisciplined and irresponsible passions.

Coomaraswamy was a beacon, and like the great Prophets, a "Warner." He renewed the faith of other lonely intellectuals who had by other paths attained to similar conclusions. He conferred on artists, as an accolade, a sense of the dignity and glory of their professions, and those who read and understood him and transmitted his message to others, felt that he had been a healing and inspiring force.

He was again a demonstration of how essential for a dangerously over-specialized and hence fragmented world, is the whole man; the man who unites

knowledge, with insight devotion with discrimination, who can cull the best of the past and relate it to the needs of the present, and point out in timeless terms the path of happiness and fulfillment.

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## RECOLLECTIONS OF ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. Robert von Heine-Geldern, New York, U.S.A.)*

It always is a strange experience to meet for the first time a man with whose ideas, as expressed in his literary work, one has been familiar for many years. My first impression, when I met Coomaraswamy in the early months of 1938, was one of stiffness, almost of coldness. There we sat, in his office in the Boston Museum, knowing that we had so many interests in common and yet unable to start a conversation.

I was not the only one who had that experience. The late Professor Lucian Scherman, himself an outstanding scholar in the fields of Indian culture, religion and archaeology, told me after his first interviews with Coomaraswamy that he found it difficult to establish a real personal contact. Yet, a few years later all that had completely changed and Scherman, who by nature was a rationalist, had become deeply interested in Coomaraswamy's metaphysical ideas and told me that they had opened up to him new aspects of life and thought which he had previously neglected.

Coomaraswamy's initial shyness and reticence may have been due in part to the British side of his heritage. In the main, however, they must have been due to the understandable wish of a man who was

willing and eager to reveal his innermost thoughts, first to probe his counterpart, before he was ready to touch upon those subjects which were nearest to his heart.

I shall never forget those weeks in the summer of 1938 which it was my good fortune to spend as Dr. and Mrs. Coomaraswamy's guest in their camp in the woods of Maine. It was a unique experience, after roaming through the immense forests, to sit in that lonely and rustic home, high up on a hill, listening to my hosts' tales of their life in India and discussing with them questions of mythology and of traditional metaphysical lore. Somehow, the situation reminded me a little of the atmosphere in which the Upanishads must have been born. Although by no means voluble and by nature and principle inclined to silence and restraint, Coomaraswamy, like the religious teachers of ancient times, felt the urge to communicate his ideas. "Nobody will ever stop me from talking metaphysics," he once told a mutual friend of ours.

Among most scholars there exists a more or less distinct division between their scientific interests and their actual life. Not so with Coomaraswamy. Life and knowledge to him were one. "I am a traditionalist," he used to say. To him, the myths and cosmological conceptions, not only of India, but of the whole world, were not mere objects of folkloristic curiosity. He regarded them as the symbolic expressions of a primeval and universal wisdom, of an innate and mystic knowledge, rooted in palaeolithic times and transmitted and growing through the ages. In this respect, his ideas might be compared to those of another great scholar of our times, Father Wilhelm Schmidt, who considers all religions, and particularly

those of the most primitive tribes, as emanating from an "Uroffenbarung," an original divine revelation.

Coomaraswamy's knowledge in the field of religious thought was stupendous. He was as familiar with Greek and Latin literature and with the works of the German mystics of the middle ages as with the Vedas and the Buddhist *sutras*. All religions to him were essentially one, not in the sense of a shallow and superficial syncretism, but as various aspects and expressions of the same fundamental truth. As he wrote in a paper published posthumously in "India Antiqua," an anniversary volume honoring a great fellow scholar, Jean Philippe Vogel:

"There are scarcely any, if any, of the fundamental doctrines of any orthodox tradition that cannot as well be supported by the authority of many or all of the other orthodox traditions, or, in other words, by the unanimous tradition of the *Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*."

As a traditionalist, Coomaraswamy had a strong feeling for the meaningfulness and importance of liturgy. "If I were a Catholic," he once told me, "I would participate in all church festivals and sacred rituals the whole year round."

Religion, to Coomaraswamy, was a matter of deadly earnest, an arduous and thorny path which admitted no easy shortcut. In order to exemplify its uncompromising inexorability he once quoted, in our conversations, Jesus' words in Luke:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

He himself had, to my genuine regret, completely forsaken that field in which he had achieved such brilliant success and acquired world-wide fame, the history and interpretation of Indian art. He considered it no longer as essential to his inner life. In another age and under another climate he might well have left the world long ago and entered the third *asrama*, living in the forests as an anchorite, devoted solely to meditation and to the achievement of ultimate enlightenment. At seventy, he actually decided to do so and was just preparing his voyage to India for this purpose, when death overtook him.

It was perhaps in his views of society that Coomaraswamy's Indian background found its strongest expression. During those weeks in Maine the Czechoslovakian crisis was rapidly coming to a head and it looked as if we would have war in the very near future. When I once casually observed that it was my ardent wish to be allowed, despite my age, to fight for the liberation of my native country, Austria, Coomaraswamy earnestly rebuked me for the impropriety of wishing, as a scholar, to transgress into the sphere of *kshatriya* activities. He deeply disapproved of modern trends among women and considered it as a sign of degeneration and as a cruel injustice that women were allowed or forced by circumstances to work in offices and factories and thus be deprived of what he considered their true place in life. He also distrusted all politicians and the whole system of parliamentary democracy. "I want a king," he used to say.

It would be wrong to attribute this attitude to reactionary tendencies. Coomaraswamy loved liberty and hated tyranny as strongly as any one. What he

wanted was an organic society, based on nature, tradition and justice, a society headed by a *dharma raja* and governed by ethic conceptions, in which each person would find his proper place and function according to the laws of *dharma*.

The depth and austerity of Coomaraswamy's metaphysical views did not affect his everyday countenance. On the contrary, he was rich in that most attractive quality of character, genuine humour. He enjoyed fun and was ever ready to laugh about an amusing story, and sometimes he would tell one himself. His passion for gardening added a charming human touch to his complex and amiable personality. Thoroughly kind-hearted and full of sympathy and understanding, he would go to extremes in helping his friends and fellow scholars. In him, all that is best in eastern and western culture had been welded together in a unique and harmonious combination.

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## GENIUS IS WISDOM, AND YOUTH.

(*Dr. Joseph T. Shipley, New York.*)

The first feeling that came to me, every time I saw Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, was of his youthfulness. He used to drop me a note of his impending trip from Boston, or call me over the 'phone when he reached New York; then I would hear him taking the stairs as lightly as an adolescent, and in a moment would feel the firm and genial clasp of his outstretched hand.

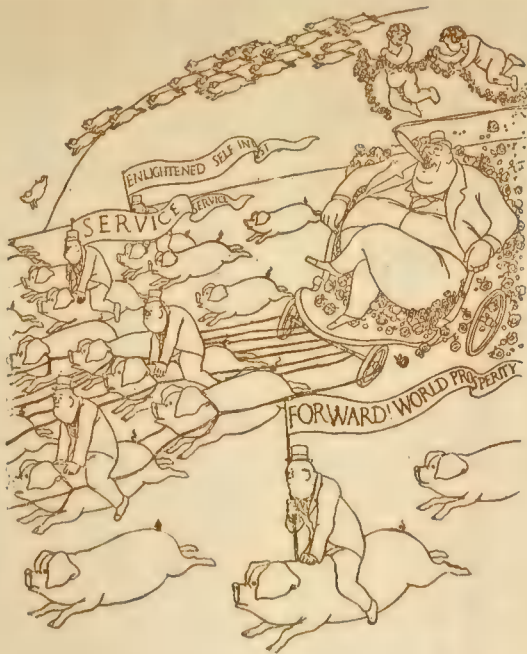
We would walk to the restaurant together; that is, for all my fifteen years less toll of life, I had to quicken my step a bit to keep pace with him. There

was in his lively gait, please note, no slightest hint of haste. Ananda Coomaraswamy was impelled by a buoyancy as natural as the lift of the winds across the dunes of his Massachusetts. I think not of the city, but of bush-tufted sand-dunes by the white-crested sea, when I think of Ananda Coomaraswamy.

While I mention first this physical aspect of the man, an immediate and abounding quality, I do so because the same youthfulness pervaded his inner spirit. The mind that Coomaraswamy turned upon life was insatiate, roving like a bee to suck the essence of every blossom of thought or fancy, but unerringly making a bee-line to bear back honey to his wisdom's hive. His was a wisdom engendered of the world's best. The East and the West were conjoined in him; so that he achieved a detachment born of their conflict, and an understanding born of their fusion. He could examine each without passion, and love both without blindness.

There is no doubt that materialism was to Ananda Coomaraswamy a grievous blemish on our times; that he saw the arch evil in a relativism that destroyed all ultimate values, swept away all standards, devitalized all goals. In these respects, the West is more fully and disastrously burdened than the less hurried and harried East. Indeed, many of the problems now heavily troubling the East are dubious gifts of the Western countries.

There, indeed, is the crux of the problem—and the explanation of Coomaraswamy's life work. For he knew that, increasingly, the ills of the world must be cured together; increasingly, the world is one. The East must awaken to modern science, must accept the modern speed. But the West must recapture the



PROGRESS: by Denis Tegetmeier, in Eric Gill, *Unholy Trinity*, London, Dent, 1942.

**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy's favourite Greetings Card.**

*"Down a steep place into the sea"*

MATTHEW VIII: 12

"As the tyrant delights when he can torment men, and spend their sweat in show and luxury, in foolish strange attire and behaviour, and ape the fool: so do also the devils in hell . . . He who sees a proud man sees . . . the devil's servant in this world; the devil does his work through him. He thinks himself thereby fine and important, — and is thereby in the sight of God only as a fool, who puts on strange clothing and takes to himself animal forms"

JACOB BEHMEN, *Six Theosophic Points*,

VI: 36-8

"The idea of Progress arose in the eighteenth century from the belief that man had waited long enough and that it was impossible to expect God to do anything to alleviate his sufferings or bring about the triumph of good . .

"In material things there has been 'progress': there has been progress in investigation, in the amount of knowledge available, in the speed at which we can move, in the rate of production of goods, in centralization, in the factorification of education, in the power and speed of destruction, in the power of Mammon, in the loss of individual freedom, in the number of deaths on the road, in the decline of wisdom before the increase of knowledge, in the decline of true learning before the mere accumulation of facts and the multiplication of philosophies, in the chaos of our industrial, economic, social and political order . . .

"If there has ever emerged an anti-Christ in history, it is 'the idea of Progress'"

J. W. BUCKLER

"Theology surrendered to ethics, ethics to economics, and man followed suit from a spiritual being to an economic animal"

H. J. MASSINGHAM

"Whenever the timber trade is good, permanent famine reigns in the Ogowe region"

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Eastern patience, must relearn what the East has not wholly forgotten: that the spirit is the essential aspect in man, that the spirit is more valuable, and must be kept mightier, than the sword.

It is as the preserver, interpreter, and stalwart champion of this essential wisdom that Ananda K. Coomaraswamy lived in the West, and was loved, and made his influence felt, throughout the world.

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### THE YOGI ARTIST.

*(Sri Swami Sivananda, Rishikesh, India.)*

Salutations to that Supreme Architect who shaped the entire Universe out of Himself and created in it multitudes of creatures delightful to look at, apparently different externally, but essentially the same—Himself—in their soul, all the work of His Cosmic Play!

Even the Almighty Lord, the abode of Eternal Bliss, is fond of art; look at His marvellous creation, especially MAN! Out of His Breath the Music of the Pranava, He created all this; and even when He withdraws Creation into Himself, He would do so through His Tandava Nritya! God is the greatest artist. He is the basis, embodiment, soul, root and Master of Art. Lord Krishna, the fullest manifestation of the Unmanifested, was a Master-dancer; His Music was entrancing; every act of His, every movement of His limbs, the very look of His eyes bespoke of the fullness of Art that He represented. True art is an expression of Satchidananda.

A true artist is a Yogi of very high order, who has drunk deep the nectar of realisation of the Lord.

He dives into the soul of creation, into That Immortal Essence, Unfading Beauty—the Atman—negating externals. His powers of concentration are supernatural, his intellect is pure, sharp and subtle; his heart pure and vision clear. He communes with the Atman and creates marvellous pieces of art.

Sri Ananda K. Coomaraswamy is such an artist. His life is a complete dedication to the revival of true art and to freeing it from the thralldom of base, "modern" mushrooms which have threatened to stunt its growth. He is one of the pioneers in the field of art and has been responsible in a large measure to bringing about a complete reorientation of the general outlook on art, divorcing art from the forces of materialism to whose influence art had fallen a prey and re-unite it with its lawful Lord—the Soul. Sri Coomaraswamy has wonderfully combined in himself a true artist and a great philosophical thinker. Naturally so, as one goes with the other! His achievements in the field of art are great; equally great are his spiritual attainments. What Sri Rabin-dranath Tagore did from his abode in Santiniketan, Sri Coomaraswamy has done from Boston; in fact, it would be true to call Sri Coomaraswamy, Tagore-abroad! Between themselves they have conquered the West.

Free India's first task should be the reclamation of her past glory in the field of Art and Yoga. Hers is the richest heritage. When the rest of the world was sunk in barbarism, it was she who held the pawn for art, and spirituality. The candle of human civilisation was lit from the eternal fire of culture that was blazing in India. That process is being repeated now; many a savant of art and Yoga has spread throughout



**DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.**  
(Drawing by Sri H. V. Ram Gopal)

the world the lofty message of the East—a message of Beauty, a message of Peace, Bliss and Knowledge Absolute, a message which alone could console the weary heart of the war-worn peoples of the world and bring within their easy reach love, peace, amity, brotherhood and prosperity. Sri Coomaraswamy, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Rama Tirtha and Sir S. Radhakrishnan are the pioneers in this field. Sri Coomaraswamy is a true Indian and a real patriot. Thanks to him, the fair name of India has once again come to be hailed all over the world as a country where the light of Art and Yoga, Culture and Civilisation, is still burning, illumining the path of humanity to a saner living of mutual love, service and harmony.

A true patriot of India, Sri Coomaraswamy has not contented himself with emancipating Indian art from the bondage of overwhelming materialistic influences of the scientific West, but has striven with every fibre of his being to raise India to the status of a World Teacher. Truly, patriotism should take the form of bringing infinite glory to one's own land, not merely freeing it from foreign domination; in this respect, Sri Coomaraswamy has rendered yeoman service to the country.

Genius is not necessarily hereditary. But in Sri Coomaraswamy's case we find that he has had a noble parentage, he has lived as a member of a family of geniuses, and has, by his own ceaseless endeavour, enriched himself, ennobled his soul and brought out all his faculties, nourished them: he now occupies a position from where he is able freely to distribute the fruits of his labours for the benefit of humanity at large.

The family tradition and his own upbringing have left such deep religious influences on Sri Coomaraswamy that though he has continuously lived in the West for a number of years, he has guarded himself against the influx of materialistic influences. He is a man of sound principles; no extraneous forces dare break into the strong fortress which he has built around himself! Such should be the spirit of Indians who go abroad.

The simplicity of the Doctor's soul has found expression in his writings, too. His approach to the subject he handles is straight; his exposition clear, precise and unambiguous. Sri Coomaraswamy does not believe in confusing word-formations which, though high-sounding, do not carry much meaning behind them! The reader is able to enjoy the landscape in its entirety, without getting lost in the woods! Sri Coomaraswamy is a journalist of a very high order, too. He has rescued journalism from cheap vulgarity which well-nigh threatened to devour it; and raised the standard of literature from the low depths into which the uncultured taste of the vast majority of the reading public has dragged it into. Journalism, thus, owes a great deal to the untiring labours of Sri Coomaraswamy.

Sri Coomaraswamy is a versatile genius. His writings cover a wide range of subjects. Each book of his is a masterpiece in itself, an authority on the subject—the product of years of close and intense research; careful, keen and high thinking. The masterly way in which he deals with the topics clearly proves his great meditative powers and his penetrating intellect. He deals with high problems of metaphysics with the same facility with which he deals with art.

Lastly, I greatly admire his tenacious adherence to the cause to which he first dedicated himself and his unflinching devotion to it. These are characteristics peculiar to great Yogis. We find developed in him to a very high degree, the sterling virtues of *Sraddha* and *Bhakthi* (Sanskrit expressions which do not have corresponding English terms to cover the exact sense). From a quiet corner in the Boston Museum in the West, he has, unostentatiously and without aiming at spectacular “head-line” newspaper-blazing, spread his lofty message throughout the world! I call that a super-human achievement.

Glory to Sri Coomaraswamy! Glory to the Lord!  
OM SHANTIH!

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## MEMORIES OF THE PERSON.

(*Dr. Eric Schroeder, Boston, U.S.A.*)

*I sat upon the shore*

*Fishing, with the arid plain behind me*

*Shall I at least set my lands in order?*

*London Bridge is falling down falling down*

*falling down.....*

*Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.*

*Shantih shantih shantih*

*(The Waste Land*

*—T. S. Eliot)*

I had occasionally seen the figure of Coomaraswamy in the years between 1931 and 1936 walking swiftly through one of the Museum galleries on his way to the Library, or taking his seat at some lecture hall

in Boston, noticeable as he was, lofty, already rather haggard, with a head like a tomahawk. When I was told; "That's Coomaraswamy," I recalled a book of essays—*The Dance of Shiva*—which I had read and which had not struck me, the writer being very much of an advocate and the reader in this case not ready to be convinced, as being entirely honest. To a stranger's eye the first impression was of great theatrical distinction, and of an outer manner guarded and secretive. What secret was guarded there I was too callow to wonder much; and the half-formed suspicion of a possibly untrustworthy person was, I think, my only prepossession when I went to work as a volunteer in the Boston Museum.

Certain cautious gestures of hospitality when I was introduced, the finding of a place for my table, the offering of cigarettes, and the willingness of a man who was obviously and really busy to talk and help, began to dissipate this predilection simply by making me at home with him. Most of my first day was spent down in a cellar storage among dusty unexhibited objects; but when I emerged at the end of the darkened winter afternoon to speak to Mr. Tomita, the Curator of the Asiatic Department, Coomaraswamy walked into Mr. Tomita's office and sat down to listen. Some of the antiquities had interested me; and I was expatiating upon them with enthusiasm. Mr. Tomita, who disapproved of Dr. Coomaraswamy's negligence in his purely curatorial functions, observed pointedly that it would be a very good thing if someone would put that storage in proper order, for it had long been a disgrace. There was a short silence. Then Dr. Coomaraswamy's rather mumbling tones emerged from

the shadow beyond the lamplight.

"Perhaps one of these days I ought to take a run down and have a look at the old place," he said, like a London stockbroker remembering after the lapse of many years the ivy-mantled home of his ancestors.

What irony! It was not only the sublime detachment from what other people expected of him which delighted me, but rather the incongruity of this efflorescence, this perfectly aimed quotation from Edwardian conventionality, from the surface of a personality so unconventional and so unsentimental. Laughing, I looked toward the speaker. The lenses of his large spectacles gleamed, and his cigarette-end glowed; I could more dimly see through the thin beard lines of laughter drawn about his painfully fastidious mouth. He was sitting back, his legs crossed with the elegance only possible to the very thin; and his head was tilted in the cock of a connoisseur as he enjoyed the effect of his humor. In that moment I knew that whatever I thought about him I should like him.

Thus began a ten years' friendship which was both an intimacy and a running fight, in which he was finally the victor. Our days at the Museum were strenuously spent, for he was pouring out articles in the full spate of his matured metaphysical understanding. He read on at night, and worked in the early morning, so that his Museum hours were only a part of his day. Behind a long table drifted deep with journals, books, and papers his labor proceeded. From the window at his back a light which was generally cold fell upon the figure which became infinitely familiar: the long iron-gray hair, the characteristic brooding pose, and the movements of his very beauti-

ful fingers as he pushed or turned his books. When he wanted a reference, he would rise, and stand for a moment with sunken head, then comb back his gray locks with his hands and go prowling off along the bookshelves with a loose hound-like walk peculiarly his own. The most vivid impression of his physique can be had of an anecdote: he was once walking, he told me, along Commonwealth Avenue with his dog, of some slender long-haired breed, an Afghan, I think, or a Saluki, when he heard the voice of one of the many to whom unconventionality is offensive, demanding sarcastically at his back: "Which is which?"

Another vivid image is of an intolerably hot muggy afternoon in summer. We were trying to work, but our brains were steamed. Suddenly he stood up and muttered: "This is no good;" then, slinking into the Asiatic Department safe, he lay down, drew up his knees, and fell asleep. I looked in on him after a while; lying gaunt on his inhospitable couch, with the dusty gilt paraphernalia of Asiatic religions calm above him, he presented in a pathos not easy to define the physical appearance of an anchorite at rest. But this was exceptional. His only normal breaks from work were conversations with his visitors, or the sharing of some good incident. I would hear his voice interrupt me with "Listen to this....."; and he would regale me with some precise correspondence of formulation, or some incandescent sentence—"O Eloquence the more mighty that it is unadorned! O Axe cleaving the Rock!" Such things continued to shape his mind, I think, or to temper it. I remember well the piety with which he communicated Bede's great saying about Heaven: "Nullum ibi honoris desiderium pulsat"; and the fastening of it in him was a

stage, I suppose, in his mental pilgrimage.

In those days we were constantly engaged in argument; for I was trying to revive the art-historian who had become extinct in the philosopher, and he was determined to evoke the philosopher in an immature art-historian. Time was on his side, perhaps; it was certainly not on mine. Though he was perfectly generous and communicative on historical questions, he was not interested in them any more. He felt interest in present history, the industrialist rape of Asia and the prostitution of Western intellect to the contingent, but his *delight* was in metaphysics. All the waves of historical argument beat upon him in vain; persistently, persistently he diverted history into the eternal categories which alone he was willing to admit. Why he was not exasperating is a nice question, but he was not; and I began to regard as things personally valuable the high sloped forehead, the hawk-like and magisterial nose, the eye, often veiled and cold, which suddenly became affectionate as he invited one to a joke, or gleamed with command as he stated meaning.

His concern with Museum objects and their history, with dating and attribution, was now slight, though his memory retained astonishingly much of his old great learning in this respect. Taste and expository ingenuity in the galleries he called "window-dressing" and left to others who cared more than he. These others were, very properly in a Museum, a majority; and they tolerated Ananda's philosophic dogmatism unconvinced. One day at lunch we were going at it hammer and tongs, Ananda maintaining the essentially metaphysical character of artistic production and I asserting the frequent and signifi-

cant predominance of moral and natural motive, he citing texts and I adducing works and circumstances, he pointing out the continuity in all traditional cultures of metaphysical reference in symbols, I challenging him to explain on any such grounds so characteristic a form as for instance the panegyric in Mediaeval Persia. Our table-companions at last found a spokesman in the Director of the Museum. "I don't want to hurry you," he said politely, "but when you two have *quite* finished splitting that *particular* hair, will you take time out to pass me the salt?"

As I came to know him more intimately, at home as well as at work, his individuality gave me increasing pleasure. He had a specially *English* cosiness, which was rather surprising in so relentless a critic of English national motives, but which was quite unmistakable, a certain appropriateness to old tweeds, a handsome relaxation and tact in the enjoyment of a fireside armchair, a slight but aristocratic taste in personalities, and an English literary wit. He rested in the pleasantness of good things, liked good and disliked bad food, discussed quite earnestly the problem of getting good clothes in America, and gave me the name of an excellent hatter. The difference between a "gentleman" and another was surprisingly real to him. And indeed I began to notice inconsistencies in him as a character which for a while interrupted the growth of trust, though it never affected liking. It was odd, I thought, that one who extolled as normal the anonymity of the right craftsman should be concerned with his own reputation. Yet he still took unashamed pleasure in what he called his fan-mail; and he had done, I found, working over Museum material, even stranger things in the past, defending.

for instance, his early dating of the great Ragmala paintings against Goetz's criticism by arguments which when examined appeared, to say the least, disingenuous. His marital career was inappropriate to a man who wrote of marriage as a sacrament, and some of his financial dealings seemed no less incongruous with the views of right livelihood which he expounded. And yet he had spent practically all his substance for what I could see to be a consecrated end, the publication of his work. And he had had, by worldly standards, great possessions. I was puzzled.

One day we had gone out to lunch at a restaurant near the Museum. Ananda produced a letter from his pocketbook. "I would like you to read this," he said; "in a way it's a very personal letter; but I'd like you to read it." And he passed over a sheet covered with the strong and delicate handwriting of Eric Gill. I read the message, an expression of the English craftsman's love and gratitude, a testimony of kindred. Whether it was intended as an indirect rebuke to me I hardly know; but I felt the embarrassment of rebuke. My betters thought better of my friend than I did. It began to appear that I had been wrong in paying attention to my instructor's inconsistencies when I should have been attending to his consistency. For the consistency mattered, and to me; the inconsistencies were his own concern, and it was not certain that they really mattered.

Not long after this he said "If I had known always what I know now, I think I would have tried to make my practice more like what I have preached." This really should have clarified everything, although I did not immediately understand at the time how very much he meant by what he said. His belief in salva-

tion by knowledge was entire. In much the same way as by bodily habit he disposed his standing weight utterly on one leg and stood in *contrapposto*, or as a monopode, propped on his lecture-desk or against a wall with one leg hooked up, or as, when his shoelace came loose, he dropped swiftly on to one knee, feeling apparently more at home concentrated upon half his natural support, he lived habitually in his intellect in a much greater degree of concentration than other men. As that was perfected, other things fell away. This made the personality exciting and memorable, and *edifying* in a sense in which the character, the whole psychic complex, was not. In the environment of Boston, where the character is regarded as the man and the personality as a mask, it was impossible that he should be esteemed. He was too famous and too odd to be ignored; but a superstitious or vulgar respect for him as a "distinguished" figure was the usual way of regarding him. It was generally realized that he had something important to say, and that it would be wise to give him a hearing; but very few thought it was wise to take him seriously.

Yet he was an exemplar, or in the radical sense a martyr. By the time that I came to know him the deliberate was predominant in him, and the personality was actually inspiring as being consciously directed by the intellectual will. Passionate desire for a better social order had almost yielded to a contemplative recognition of the working of cause and effect, and to a purer benevolence. The aesthetic and erotic to which he was once addicted had been discarded. The Charioteer now held the reins, and all the perceptions of a fierce and learned mind were turned, easily now, to the service of conviction. What

relation his earlier writings bore to earlier circumstance I do not know. But in the last ten years of his life he saw with surpassing clearness how much thought has been muddled by the pervading materialism of our time, and foresaw the chaos into which "progress" is plunging. And something masterful, for in him then one should not call it ambitious, dedicated his life to an attempt to dominate this materialism by exposing it as what it was, and by stating opposite truth. The purpose was noble. The will that served it was noble, and the intellect which fulfilled the will was noble.

In earlier essays his genius for emphasis had tempted him into assertions not always just in my opinion; and his attack on ephemeral particulars, though serious and generally very effective, partook of the limitations of its opposite. But in later years his adversary was world-wide and perennial—Man's ignorance of What he is. His weapons were the Scriptures, the words of the holiest thinkers; and in these years it may be said that his work sanctified him. Our last conversations made me aware of a partial approach to sanctity in Ananda. He still dramatized his conviction: he was still, I think, conscious of me as audience when once, leaning back and looking askance at the granite facade of the Museum visible, with heavy clouds rolling above it, through his window, he said "You know, all this is to me as if it wasn't there." But I had now the feeling that although conscious of his interlocutor he was perfectly serious, and that his attention to myself was a cool but perfectly serious concern not for my agreement but for my well-being. When, in our early acquaintance, he asked me what of his work I had

read, and I mentioned *The Dance of Shiva*, he said "I have come a long way since that, you know." He had.

At the end of one summer my wife and I went up to stay with the Sage, as we called him, in his forest house near the Canadian border of Maine. Evening was just darkening into night when we left our car at the foot of the steep ascent and walked up a rough road through trees to the knoll on which it stood, humped and black, with faint yellow light in the windows. Our knocking roused footsteps, and Ananda opened the door, a wilder silhouette than we expected, very rough in the jacket, very baggy in the knickerbockers, his long shanks ending in boots like boats. Behind him in the room half-lit appeared the timbers of an open roof, with an old pair of trousers hung up in the gloom like a regimental banner in the nave of a church. A table near the door with tools and fishing tackle; a battered axe by the fireplace; and in the far corner the curtains of a great bed partly drawn.

Our arrival had something of a new meeting; again I felt a flattering *cortesía* in the deliberateness of his cautious hospitality. His handshake was always accompanied by a curious raising and shrinking of the shoulders, as if he expected one's grip to be too firm; but the ordeal over was generally followed by some gesture of complete relaxation. My prowling round the room had revealed much in the way of implements for dealing with rocks and wood, with flowers and fishes, little in the way of art beyond a gramophone, and an admonitory poverty of books. The last he proceeded, when questioned, mumblingly to explain, with some little apparent distaste; and then he led

the way to the kitchen, where he set about making supper.

This kitchen was the scene of high old times. Ananda used to throw fuel into the stove in the attitude of one who, only too conscious that he was playing with fire, expected it to spit back at him; but he was expert in what cookery we did. The staple of our diet was pancakes—"Aunt Jemima." This was mainly because we liked Aunt Jemima, but partly also because the only bread in the house was very good bread, too good to be thrown away, but very tough bread, too tough to be conveniently cut—a huge old loaf with a crust as obdurate as tortoiseshell. On occasion, when somebody felt the absolute necessity of bread, Ananda would approach this loaf, where it lay upon the counter, with a large hunting-knife, and rising on to the toes of his boots would rock forward with all his weight upon the enemy. The blade entered the crust with an agonizing squeak, but a few minutes' hard work produced the fragment called for, which he bore solemnly back to the table.

There was in the cupboard the remains of a bottle of Apricot Brandy, laid in some time before, and probably for medicinal use: our host did not care for alcohol, which gave him a headache. But on the last night of our visit we were clearing things up, since Ananda was going to drive back to Boston with us. It was felt that the hilarious festivities of the kitchen should have a climax, and the bottle be finished. After supper, accordingly, it was uncorked and poured; we raised our glasses and drank. I could hardly believe my palate. All alcohol had long been evaporated, and what remained was a simple syrup, precisely the juice of canned apricots. I looked at the others. My

wife evidently tasted what was wrong—she looked amused and disappointed. But not so the Sage: catching but misinterpreting my astonished gaze, he raised his eyebrows in grave appreciation and murmured in a voice of awe “Very smooth!”

Innocent indeed he was in many matters. He was not what is called a man of the world, and would have made a poor rogue. He was pure in many loves. The visionary sunlight of William Morris’s romances delighted him; and his affection for plants was apparently a simple appreciation of loveliness or character, without a tinge of sentimentality or egoism. He had made a large rock-garden in Maine with his own hands, and had a quite elaborate garden at his Needham house in which he toiled with his wife. These places were not settings for himself (though all who saw him there would remember him there), but simply homes for his plants. He did not pose in them, but worked doggedly, or if he had visitors led them swiftly about, standing to point out inconspicuous beauties, or dropping on one knee to pull a new-grown weed or make some rough place smooth with his likable fingers.

The arrangements in Maine were comfortable but very simple. There was, for instance, no bath. “When it becomes unbearable,” he explained, “we go down to the lake.” Profoundly unlike his American neighbors, who devote immense moral energy to being practical, he was yet startlingly practical in his own way. At lectures, for instance, he would sometimes with the same simplicity compose himself for sleep, confident that if the lecture were to prove worth listening to it would keep him awake. He had, of course, a sufficient sense of decorum, and would tell me to wake



**Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in  
Maine about 1928.**



**His Scholarly Pursuit—Sketch by  
Sri S. N. Alandkar.**

him up if he should begin to snore.

Of all personal images perhaps the most significant is the figure of the fisherman. He was expert in this rather un-Buddhist pastime. "If you want to learn to fish," his Maine neighbors agreed, "you couldn't have a better teacher; he's the top." He used the best English tackle, from Hardy's, and possessed a great variety of flies, though he regarded the gaudier confections with some contempt. The wily and patient process of his fishing really began in the neighbourhood of the proposed pond, with a questioning of the innkeeper or some other fisherman upon recent "takes," conducted in a tone of hypocritical indifference. And then he would sit hour after hour in his boat, or stand upon the shore, quiet as the incarnate destiny of all fishes; hour after hour his line would whistle forth and drop on the water, as he waited, the breeze stirring the long hair beneath a weatherbeaten hat speckled with spare flies, his fell profile enjoining silence as he lifted his face in a fresh cast, or watched through lowered lids the drag of the fly.

On the last afternoon of the fishing season we went down to fish in the river. It was too bright for much luck; but with his usual patience Ananda cast on and on, the late sun gilding his thin brown cheek as it gilded the faded woods behind him. At last he got a bite, and landed his fish—it was a young and foolish trout too small to keep. The fisherman wet his hand, took him off the hook, and looked at him, with a face in which the formidable expression of his fishing had altered to gentleness. For a moment or two he seemed to enjoy the little creature's all-seeing stare and golden side, then tossed him back to his

element, and watched the bright ripples of his track as he made for deep water. "Well," he said, "that's the end of the year."

The figure of the fisherman is lasting in my mind because he was a fisher of men. However uncompromising his rhetoric, he wanted to persuade. What response meant to him appeared from his pleasure in the festschrift which was being prepared for his birthday; and he was profoundly moved to catch an echo in a notable mind, like Gill's or Guenon's. Even in small matters he used a fisherman's patient reiterative insistence. Once he and Mrs. Coomaraswamy took my wife to a flower-show. He was at this time greatly interested in cacti; cacti live in waste lands where other plants cannot, and exemplify organic life where the inorganic seems to prevail. He had a winter garden in his conservatory of those armored plants which put forth the most surprising of all flowers. My wife told me how he kept leading her back as if by accident to the stall where cacti were sold until at last she succumbed and bought one. She knew what he was at, but only resisted up to a certain point. On me he plied the same cunning of reiterated temptation, persistently diverting my interest in the beauty or history of human works to what was scriptural in them. After I had left the Boston Museum, and saw him less often, he kept a pull on me by periodic postcards in his neat back-sloping hand, calling my attention to some book or article.

Probably his own intellectual achievement had taken its original spring from *emotion*: a feeling for the disorder of our times, our art and politics, was, I guess, the birth of his life purpose, and his technique of emphasis was still at its most effective long after-

wards in a piece like *Am I My Brother's Keeper?*, written, as he told me, "at white heat." But though he passed from one emphasis to another, even to infidelities he was indifferent; for *he was moving on*. His being was directed not to a blending of the elements of personality, but Platonically and hierarchically to the domination of one right-chosen element, intellect. However he fell short in external action, his life, seen from this point of view, was a triumph.

In our personal relationship the fisherman was quietly determined that I should move away from emotion in the same direction, and he was artful in preventing other motions. Once, when I was pleased with a couple of articles I had written for a journal emphasising with material from Persian sources the consciously aesthetic approach of Persian artists to their problem, he said "I saw your articles in "*Parnassus*"—they were very *smart*; I should call them *smart*", using an adjective well calculated to rouse my own disgust for something which he knew I probably fancied as sound and well-written. On another occasion he could coax no less obliquely. He saw at my house a painting I had just finished, the symbolism of which was more in line with the traditional symbolism he cared for than that of any previous work of mine. When I saw him a week or two later in the Museum, he reverted to the picture: "I keep thinking of that painting of your's— the horse's skull: it was very well painted. I'd hardly expected you to paint so well." I have a strong suspicion that he was flattering my technical prowess with the indirect object of having me continue to paint symbols which he recognized as serious.

Our long tug-of-war ended in my being pulled across the mark. The unruly fish came in. He won. The heron figure will always stand there, the wizard and awakener, the teacher of my adult life. He himself disclaimed any role beyond that of Transmitter, and rightly: though I loved the person, gratitude for what he taught is in a way even more personal than affection. He more than any other taught me to read the eternal content in human works: he taught me to read Scripture, and his gift seems to me the greatest gift one person can give another in our days.

Now that he has lived his life, and his gifts have become bequests, the metaphysic which he drew from the deepest human wells and poured abroad, meaning after meaning, will, I expect, water what is to come. As the disasters which he anticipated overtake the generation he addressed, it is at any rate sure that an antithetical wisdom like his own will here and there be purified to the semblance of what he was accustomed to summon from times and regions remote, the human witness of Asia and of the age of Western piety. That he should become his printed words will certainly accord with his living desire. But we do not wrong him in recalling the loved personality now extinct, in which the Artificer assembled materials both precious and ironical, but from which a rising will of great purity constructed at the last a material Image to all who saw it unmistakable, the Image of a master theologian, the bodily shape of the Comprehensor, in which intellectual positiveness had become visibly one with knowledge, leaving as if printed by the foot of God Absconded the absolute authority of his face in death.

**DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY**

*(Mr. Christmas Humphreys, President, The Buddhist Society, London.)*

It was Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's book *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* which brought me into the Buddhist Movement when I first read it at the age of 17 in 1918, and I have read it many times since. I, therefore, have a particular regard for his memory. I regard this book as the finest single volume on Buddhism yet published.

**ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY.**

*(Miss Rose Standish Nichols, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.)*

As I remember Ananda Coomaraswamy, when he and his lively wife first came to my house on Beacon Hill many years ago, he towered above the other guests physically, intellectually and spiritually. As he joined us around the tea-table even before he uttered a word his mere presence uplifted the conversation and clarified our ideas as ozone vivifies the atmosphere. An inner serenity gave him poise and freedom from self-consciousness whether he remained silent and aloof or entered with dignified deliberation into a lively discussion. When he spoke, usually in reply to a question, he never failed to arrest our attention and to say something worth while.

Once he explained his silence by remarking that in the East it was not customary to talk except to further a definite interchange of opinions.

At first sight this tall stranger, with brown eyes and a dark beard, from an unknown country, was awe-inspiring to a superficial observer. Upon further acquaintance however it became apparent that he spoke our language to perfection and often under-

stood us better than we understand ourselves. No matter how humble or ignorant his interlocutor he never talked down to anyone. He loved simple people. Children approached him fearlessly and soon became his friends because he treated them seriously and on a footing of equality.

His philosophy and his love of humanity might have been expressed in Aristotle's prayer for peace and understanding in a Christlike spirit. "From the murmur and subtlety of suspicion with which we vex one another, give us rest. Make a new beginning and mingle again the kindred of nations in the alchemy of love. And with some finer essence temper our mind."

In the words of Baroness Helen Giskra, a welcome guest in his country house, "Dr. Coomaraswamy was that wonderful combination, an erudite scholar and a kindly tolerant man. He had what Goethe called a "panoramic mind" and nothing in the way of art, history or philosophy was foreign to him. His curiosity led him to delve deeply into all those subjects and find new meanings which he illuminated by his learning and expressed in words of literary beauty. Dr. Coomaraswamy is a great loss but he was for many years a great giver. Both East and West may be grateful for the results of his critical and creative genius."

### AN APPRECIATION.

*(Mrs. Winifred Holmes, London.)*

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy is so well-known that there is little to be said which has not been said before about his work; his books are his own true monument. But perhaps a postscript can be added to these fine works of scholarship. Dr. Coomaraswamy started with the inestimable advantage of being himself an inheri-

tor of the Indian tradition. He did not come in from outside, as do his Western colleagues. He was Indian and he looked at Indian art from within; he understood the *feeling* of it and of its subtle differences and nuances; its colour and texture and associations were all part of his emotional and sensuous make-up, while its spiritual significance spoke directly to his soul.

Only an Englishman can really *savour* English poetry, however well that poetry may be understood and enjoyed by a Frenchman, because the language of that poetry holds childhood and race associations which cannot be translated. Nor can they be acquired by an outsider. In the same way, an Englishman cannot savour, although he may admire and appreciate, French poetry.

So the Indian scholar and art historian starts with the greatest advantage of all when dealing with Indian art. He belongs to it; it belongs to him. Because of this *belonging* Ananda Coomaraswamy was able to make certain fundamental discoveries which Western scholars had not made. The most important one was that—to use his own words—‘Indian art was from the time of the Aryan invasions the joint creation of Dravidian and Aryan genius, a welding together of symbolic and representative, of abstract and explicit language and thought.’ These racial preoccupations,’ as he called them, ‘may have been determined before the age of metals.’ He finds during the course of time first one and then another tendency uppermost, while in the Gupta period they become fused into a ‘perfect synthesis,’ thus making Gupta art the most satisfying of all periods of Indian art. Scholarship never stands still. Further discoveries have been made and inscriptions deciphered since

Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote his books, but the conclusions he reached on the general lines of his subject cannot be superseded. He felt the pulse of the Indian tradition as no Western scholar, however brilliant or careful, can ever do, and yet he knew the West well enough to know how to write for it. His use of English is always clear and vivid, even when dealing with abstractions and aesthetics. His loss is a real one: but like the monuments of Asoka, his works remain.

### A. K. COOMARASWAMY.

(*Dr. P. K. Gode, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona*).

In concluding my remarks about Fine Arts in India I must not fail to offer my respectful tribute to the memory of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy who passed away since you met at Nagpur a year ago. My contact with this greatest exponent of Indian Art and Literature commenced in 1938 when I edited his *Notes on the Katha Upanisad* for the *New Indian Antiquary*. I shall never forget his willing co-operation in all my subsequent editorial activities. Indology in general and Indian Art in particular has suffered the most irreparable loss in the demise of this mystic and magnetic personality, loved and respected by scholars of all nations of the world. *I am sure that the All-India Oriental Conference will co-operate whole-heartedly in any scheme organised by Indian scholars to commemorate the name and fame of this great patriot, who by his forceful penetrating vision and unparalleled love of the beautiful kept the banner of Indian Art ever flying in the remotest parts of the world.*

(*Presidential Address for the Section of Technical Sciences and Fine Arts at the Darbhanga Session of the All-India Oriental Conference in October 1948*).

## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, A CATHOLIC EMINENTER.

(Mrs. Katharine Gilbert, Duke University,  
Durham, U.S.A.)

In the summer of 1942, after correspondence about references to classical sources and exchange of offprints, I talked one day with Dr. Coomaraswamy in his place of work in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The talk ranged far: books (he recommended for my reading *Peaks and Lamas*), art, philosophy, the state of the world, religion. I asked my interlocutor to tell me what were the implications of his obvious erudition in the literature of the Roman Catholic Church and his sympathy with its doctrine. His articles on *The Mediaeval Theory of Beauty* in the *Art Bulletin* had struck me as the best in their kind. I could not be quite sure whether he had become an avowed son of the Roman Church or whether his easy leaps from Christian Scriptures to Hindu to Islamic to Greek and Egyptian simply signified his research of profound analogies. With unforgettable swiftness and humorous glance he turned to me, saying, "No, I am not a Churchman. *I am too Catholic to be a Catholic.*" Since 1942 I have come to know much more of this scholar's writings, but for a sentence-characterization I have never found anything equal to this self-portrait. It hits off in a trice his religious and aesthetic traditionalism; his universality of interest and knowledge; and his bent for intellectual play—play on words and through symbolic reference.

As all his readers know, though Dr. Coomaraswamy did not give exclusive adherence to Thomist teaching, he believed in it as one adequate formulation of eter-

nal truth. Quotations from St. Thomas and his poetical exponent Dante, as also from St. Augustine and St. Bonaventura, abound on his pages. He agrees with these wise and good men when they say that the essence of the world is an Order created by God; that the things of sense are emblems of this Order to a rightly directed mind; that it is the final vocation of all men to re-integrate themselves into the harmony of this Order; that God draws all being to him through the joyous light and constraining cord of his goodness. He also agrees with them that for individuals to hold off in stubborn isolation is metaphysical evil; that salvation is mediated through such metamorphosis as is expressed in the Eucharistic meal; and that the things and pleasures of sense and time are sometimes props for the weak but always to be subordinated to their symbolism of the final good.

So far Dr. Coomaraswamy was hardly distinguishable from any intellectual professing Roman Catholic.

But, as he said of himself, his mind was too universal to confine its loyalty to the doctrine of any one organized Institution. The great tradition of truth and religion was for him as appropriately linked with the Greek Plato as with the Indian Buddha and the Christian St. Thomas. The nature of things had for him an eternal structure to which men of insight at all times and everywhere penetrate. In his concern with this body of absolute truth, Dr. Coomaraswamy thought of himself as a meta-physician, that is, as an intellectual devotee of the realm of spirit beyond time and space.

As Art Curator, Dr. Coomaraswamy's theory of his peculiar task was an immediate deduction from his general philosophy. To him the first excellence of art

is its truth or 'iconographical correctness,' i.e. its appropriate rendering in visible terms of central religious teaching. Art for him was one kind of metaphysical statement, and artists and true connoisseurs, serious students of final things. A second excellence of art closely involved with the first was its moral instructiveness. Art, so conceived, is a guide to right action. It is good in so far as it conduces to a happy and useful life. Again, artists are not first of all beings with a special sensitivity, vision, or plastic power, but with a 'vocation,' i.e. a call to give religious instruction through graphic means. In the larger sense all men are artists who make things in the spirit of a vocation. This being true, art, the Curator taught, has a right to freedom, not from the censorship of those responsible for the community's well-being, but from commercial pressures and pulls. Art is bound and free as religion is bound and free.

For Dr. Coomaraswamy the beauty of art is to remind rather than to delight. Aesthetic savour fulfills its function when it becomes a support for contemplation. For example, the "aesthetic shock" of the loveliness of the dewdrop passes properly into an awareness of the transitoriness of all living things. Finally, just as there is only a minor distinction of accent in art's truth as spoken by the spatially separated oriental, Thomist, and American Indian, so the history of styles in its temporal succession yields only accidental variations. Truth is eternal, not progressive or conditioned, and art being the symbolic communication of truth, is also essentially identical from age to age.

It is clear that Dr. Coomaraswamy's religion, philosophy, and aesthetics were intimately connected

and in fundamental postulates identical. As his general metaphysics spread to include the tenets of Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and the faith of men of goodwill everywhere, so his art scholarship flew from country to country and culture to culture showing the good design and symbolic reference of Maori portraits, Shaker furniture, Dürer's "knots," and Ceylon basket-work. There is amazing variety in his subjects of study and illustrative material. The multiplication of kinds of examples is as impressive as the theory is profound. And yet, in spite of the breadth and the depth, Dr. Coomaraswamy's Catholicism—more than Roman though it was—was basically simple. Moreover it was limited, for it was a militant orthodoxy. It was bound to bar out all thought of a pluralistic and empirical cast, and all art resting for its main appeal on sensuous charm and immediate delight. There were for this thinker as many clear-cut heresies as clear-cut truths. He teaches that modern culture is an illusion. There is for him no such things as artistic genius. Our bourgeois economy has a false value-scheme. The development of philosophy since Descartes and Locke is on a wrong track. In aesthetics, the current emphasis on aesthetic surface, on formal elements in abstraction from 'literary' meaning, and on 'function' without consideration of religious symbolism is provincial—"bourgeoisie fantasy."

This combination of great universality with persisting exclusiveness raises a critical problem for the interpretation of our subject. How could these opposing qualities be combined in one spirit? The key is found, I think, in the third characteristic I noted in the first paragraph when I was analyzing the significance of Dr. Coomaraswamy's semantic self-portrait:

"I am too Catholic to be a Catholic"—his bent for intellectual play, play on words and through symbolic reference. His universality is, I believe, only partially intellectual and religious. As it covers territory after territory and culture after culture, it is moved by the swiftly glancing temperament that delights in aesthetic play. As Dr. Coomaraswamy leaps from language to language and locus to locus with his identical symbol, he seems to me to produce the enlivening shock of a multi-dimensional metaphor. His ideas are not *worked* into their new relations when they arrive at a new context. The word 'aesthetics,' for example, always retains for him its original association with sensuousness, and does not grow as the discipline itself has grown. The words 'sensibility' and 'pleasure' have a resisting fixity of meaning for him, always pejorative. So when he says (referring to Kant's expression): "Disinterested aesthetic contemplation [disinterested pleasure] is pure non-sense," he seems not to have undergone the labor of thinking through Kant's criticism of aesthetic judgment, with its alteration of the color of aesthetic pleasure. Along with a core of valuable truth, then, Dr. Coomaraswamy may be said to have furnished, despite his theory to the contrary, a great metaphorical encyclopedia, where multiple forms and meanings are condensed for the delight of the sensibility and imagination. If his scholarship, while very great, at times dipped, it may have been because his nimble wit—approaching the punning habit at times—clashed together signs and symbols externally alike rather than logically entailed. Such an interpretation as I here very tentatively suggest attributes to the great scholar even more Catholicity than is usually attributed to him or

than he would have admitted. He distrusted feeling. But it seems to me that a brilliant imagination, giving language to feeling, sometimes achieved unity and bonds for him that supplemented those he established by his learning.

[Some material in this paper is drawn from a book-review of mine appearing in *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, June, 1948, used by the kind permission of the Editor.]

## DR. ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

(*Prof. O. C. Gangoly, Calcutta*)

In the sudden death of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy within a few days of the celebrations of his seventieth year, the study of Indian Art and Culture, Civilization and Philosophy, and the cause of Indian Nationalism have suffered a grievous and irremediable loss. In him the world has lost a versatile scholar, a collector and connoisseur of Art of rare sensibility and discrimination, a mystic philosopher of a wide range of thought, with a rare insight into the three great disciplines of civilization, namely, Art, Science and Religion. In him India has lost her greatest art-critic and art-historian, and the most learned and authoritative exponent and interpreter of the basic principles of Indian Art and Aesthetics, her greatest champion and defender of the values of Indian Civilization in all its phases and aspects. The wide and almost encyclopaedic range of his studies and his critical understanding of Western Philosophy and Art helped him to demonstrate the fundamental unity of man's approach to the deepest and highest problems of life; this was richly demonstrated by his brilliant essays in the elucidation of the comparative values of Indian and

medieval European Art in its Gothic Christian phases. Yet he began life as an enthusiastic student of the objective science of Geology to which he made many new and original contributions, and his scientific training in early life lent to all his thoughts, to all his writings and to all his studies of Art, a rare precision, a subtle power of analysis, and a distinctive and accurate way of presentation of his themes, which have never been excelled by any author in the East or in the West. His accomplishment as a great linguist, happy in all the major European and Indian languages, imparted to everything that he wrote a highly exquisite literary flavour. He wrote the English language with an erudition, with a mastery, with a flexibility, with an expressiveness and a charm rarely attained by any Englishman. Educated in England in his youth, he earned the diploma of a Doctor of Science from the University of London, and in later life he devoted himself to profound and intensive studies of the leading languages and cultures of India, specializing in Hindi, Pali and Vedic Literature. In him the culture of the East and the West had met in rare and surprising unity, bringing forth fruits of the highest values to the stores of the world's culture. As a publicist and an educationist his contributions deserve the highest praise and admiration. Indian Art had suffered grievously in the past owing to bad and insufficient reproductions. In his brilliant series of books and monographs he presented Indian Art through the most expensive and accurate processes of reproductions in order to bring forth and demonstrate their highest quality and beauty. It will be impossible to present within the limits of this article anything like an exhaustive survey of his great contributions to Art

and Literature. His researches into all phases of Indian Art and the elucidation of the intricate evolution of its history can never be surpassed and shall ever remain as a standing monument to his genius.

By an unhappy combination of circumstances and by the philistine attitude of Indians towards the finest flowers of their own civilization, India and modern Indians had lost the advantage of a personal contact with this high priest of Indian Nationalism and the greatest teacher and authority of Indian Art, and it is sad to think that the loss of India has been the gain of the United States where he was destined to live the greater part of his life. He never sought publicity in any form or kind and led the life of a recluse and a devotee to the cause of Indian Art, for which he incessantly worked to make new discoveries and incessantly wrote to set forth their meaning and significance. He visited India three times staying for long stretches to study the monuments at first hand and to collect materials and data for the understanding of the whole evolution of a great cycle of Art, unique in the history of the culture of the world. In the course of an extended tour in Northern India during the autumn of the year 1910, he collected an enormous quantity of the finest specimens of Indian Paintings and Drawings and other master-pieces which presented Indian Art in hitherto unknown phases and expressions. This enormous collection of Indian Art he offered to present to the Indian Nation, on the condition that an adequate Museum and Gallery should be built at Banaras, he himself offering to act as its Curator. A printed Appeal was issued, and widely circulated, but our nationalists impervious to the claims of Indian Art failed to respond to his appeal.

And ultimately the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, agreed to accept the collection and built up a worthy Gallery to house and to present the collection for the benefit of students and connoisseurs from all parts of the world. This collection now stands as a unique and the most comprehensive presentation of all phases of Indian Art brought together under one roof in any part of the world. Indeed, there is no collection in any museums of India which present such a connected and comprehensive picture of the history of Indian culture as the Indian wings of the Boston Museum. It is impossible to estimate in rupees, annas and pies the extent of the loss of this treasure to India by its transference to a distant corner of the world, inaccessible to the general bodies of Indian students. The loss of India has been an invaluable gain to America and a gain to the access in prestige and understanding of Indian Art in the West. Since this transfer of one of the finest collections of Indian art, chosen and selected by a gifted and talented connoisseur of rare discrimination and knowledge, various Indian collectors have attempted to build in India important collections of Indian Art, but none of these later collections can approach the Ross-Coomaraswamy collection of the Boston Museum, in the range and rarity of its items. To build such a collection is itself a signal service to the knowledge and understanding of a great culture which is still a sealed book to the majority of Indian Nationalists.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's appointment as the keeper of the Boston collection and as the Research Fellow in Indian Art, brought him opportunities for profound and extensive studies for elucidating the history of its evolution, studies which he published in the *Bulletins*

of the Museums in incessant series of short but erudite articles, revealing the glory of Indian Art, presented with a wealth of scholarship and citations which have extracted unstinted praise from savants from all parts of the world. Unfortunately, his signal services in the cause of elucidating the finest phases of Indian civilization have been very little known to his brother-nationals in India and the name and fame that he had acquired in India during the years 1909 and 1910 at the height of the Swadeshi Movement to which he gave a brilliant lead in the right direction by his lectures and articles (many of which were published in the pages of the *Modern Review*) faded out of memory, when this Banished Yaksha was forced to make Boston his home and his venue of cultural studies. The Indian Universities have several times invited many Western Orientalists to deliver Extension Lectures and the Indian Oriental Conferences have even invited some English Orientalists as Presidents of their sittings, but the claims of this eminent and erudite Indian scholar have been deliberately neglected and ignored in spite of repeated suggestions made by the writer. A prophet is, indeed, never honoured in his own country!

It is necessary to recall the actual nature of the fruits of his studies in the field which he had chosen and which he enriched with rare colour and flavour. Yet the task is impossible to fulfil within a limited space and we must content ourselves with a bare recital of the most important and significant of his many publications.

His first negotiations with the basic foundations of Indian culture began during his few years' stay in Ceylon as the Director of the Mineralogical Survey of

that island. In the intervals of official duties he was sorely aggrieved by the denationalized outlook of Sinhalese youths, wearing foreign costumes and adopting English names and ignoring the ancient Sinhalese culture under the enervating influence of English education. Dr. Coomaraswamy attempted to change the attitude of his brethren towards their ancient heritage and published and edited for two years the *Ceylon National Review*, preaching the value and beauty of indigenous culture of the island. This led to a scientific survey of the surviving guilds of Sinhalese craftsmen and their beautiful crafts, the history of which was set forth in his erudite monograph on *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* (1908). It was the writer's privilege to request this prophet of Indian culture to render his tribute to the shrine of Indian Art proper. And the response came in a few weeks in a stimulating pamphlet on the *Aims of Indian Art* (May, 1908) later reprinted in the pages of the *Modern Review*. This was followed by his challenging paper read at the Congress of Orientalists at Copenhagen (August, 1908) in which he courageously and ably refuted the theory of Greek influence on Indian Art, creating a great sensation among the coteries of European Archaeologists. Then followed a succession of beautiful publications, setting forth in accurate facsimiles the merits of Indian Drawings and Paintings (Hindu as well as Mughal) in two series of admirable portfolios published by the India Society, London, which, for the first time, opened the eyes of European connoisseurs to the beauties of these treasures, the high merit and technique of which challenged the merits of Holbein and Ingres. As practical aids to the study and understanding of Indian Art he published in 1910 his admirable portfolio of

*Selected Examples of Indian Art*, reproducing with comments, forty well-chosen masterpieces, many in colours. This was followed by a series of 100 collotype Plates reproducing distinguished examples of Indian Art under the caption *Visvakarma* to which the famous artist Eric Gill contributed an illuminating introduction eulogizing the values of Indian Art. These publications were not only eye-openers to European students, but also to Indians, till then absolutely impervious to the appeal of their national Art. In the intervals of incessant articles on many phases of Indian culture (later collected in 1918, in the *Dance of Shiva*), Coomaraswamy published through the Oxford University Press (1916) two admirable folio volumes on Rajput Painting, which for the first time recovered the identity of Hindu-Brahmanical Paintings, hitherto confused by European writers with Moghul miniatures. The demonstration, illustrated by 78 admirable examples for the first time placed Hindu Paintings on its own pedestal. The text set forth, with scholarly accuracy and philosophical interpretation, the entire spiritual atmosphere of Vaishnavite and Saivaite doctrines of thought in relation to which the Rajput paintings were proved to be the visual commentaries on the Bhagavata and Shaiva Puranas. Raphael Petrucci and Laurence Binyon and other European connoisseurs acclaimed this new eye-opener with unstinted praise. In the same year, a popular survey of Buddhist culture was given in his *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, admirably illustrated by typical Buddhist masterpieces and specially drawn miniatures by Dr. A. N. Tagore and Nanda Lal Bose. Three years before this work, an Edinburgh publisher issued his little volume on *The Arts and Crafts of India and*

Ceylon, which with its 195 illustrations is still the best general survey in a handy form. His duties in the Boston Museum brought forth four admirable *Catalogues of the Collection*, (Sculpture I, Rajput Painting II, Jaina Painting III, Moghul Painting IV) which for accuracy and scholarship will stand as unsurpassable models for Museum inventories. The introductions to these catalogues and the bibliographies annexed to them are mines of information and permanent guides to the study of their subjects. In the stately series of tomes of the *Ars Asiatica*, Dr. Coomaraswamy contributed two important volumes, one on the *Sculptures of Bodh Gaya* (Vol. 1935), another on the *Oriental Miniatures of the Goloubew Collection* (Vol. XIII, 1929). That he was equally at home in his erudite excursions into Hindu Paintings as in Musalman Miniatures is proved by his various essays and articles, richly documented at every step and especially, by his small monograph on the *Treatise of Al-Jazari on Automata* (Boston, 1924). His series of illustrated articles on Moghul Iconography (*Artibus Asiae*, 1927) is replete with new information and data, throwing a flood of light on little known aspects of the theme. His *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927) is the only complete survey of the subject destined to remain as an indispensable text-book for specialists as well as for ordinary students. His service in the field of Buddhist Archaeology and Iconography are invaluable. In his epoch-making essay on the *Origin of the Buddha Image* (1927), he completely demolished Foucher's thesis on the Greek origin of the Image. In his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* (1934), he analyses and traces the origins of Buddhist Art to Vedic sources

and supports his thesis by illuminating references covering the whole field of Vedic literature. His erudite dissertation on the *Nature of Buddhist Art* (published as an Introduction to *The Wall Paintings of India, Central Asia, and Ceylon*, 1938) displays an encyclopaedic knowledge of the vast expanse of Pali literature which is truly astounding. On many points, he cites parallel ideas from Greek, Latin and mediaeval Christian literature to elucidate the basic ideas underlying Buddhist iconography. His rich contributions to Comparative Mythology are attested by several learned essays, out of which two outstanding ones may be here cited:—"The Tree of Jesse and Indian Parallels or Sources" (1929), and "The Iconography of Durer's 'Knots' and Leonardo's concatenation" (1944). His two dissertations on *Yaksas* offer the most illuminating interpretation of a very little known phase of Indian Iconography, documented at each step by a wealth of illustrative photographs and drawings unsurpassed by any works on Indian Art. His meticulous examination of the *Silpasastras* and the relative texts have given us rich fruits of his brilliant studies on this topic in numerous articles. His learned and accurate rendering of various texts bearing on the techniques of Indian Art have thrown a flood of light on the most obscure phases of its history. On the theoretical aspects of the subject his outstanding contributions are the translations of the *Sukranitisara*, *Vishnu-dharmmottara*, *Silparatna*, *Abhilasartha Chintamani*, and his *One Hundred Passages on Early Text on Painting*. His meticulously accurate philological interpretations of the technical words reveal a stupefying erudition bearing on the whole literature of the subject. The most illustrative examples are his essays on

*Paroksa*, *Abhasa*, and on *Alamkaran*. For the last ten years, he had almost exclusively devoted himself to the study of Vedic texts and their interpretation. These investigations appear to be the crowning laurel of the scholastic career of one who began life as a man of science and an expert geologist. Numerous essays bearing on his studies of the Vedas attest the marvellous philological feats of an aesthetician and surprise us by the astounding range of his scholarship and expert knowledge. The present writer is not qualified to assess the merits of his Vedic studies, but competent scholars have lavished unstinted praise on his two booklets, *Angel and Titan: an Essay in Vedic Ontology*, and *A New Approach to the Vedas: An Essay in Translation and Exegesis*. There is hardly any phase of Indian culture which he has not touched and transmuted into gold. His researches into *Early Indian Architecture* documented by illustrative drawings is a solid contribution to the subject, minutely describing each member of Indian architectural construction by its technical term, drawn from the whole field of early Sanskrit literature. As a Reviewer, he has revealed new methods and manners. Most of his reviews are independent articles, supplementing the data of the subject treated, with information unknown to the author reviewed. Thus, his *Indian Architectural Terms*, a veritable encyclopaedia of the subject, has grown out of a review of Dr. Acharyya's books on Indian Architecture, and it now stands as an admirable and indispensable text-book giving a mine of information for all future students of the subject. The range of his wide knowledge, his exhaustive researches on any particular topic, his careful and meticulous way of handling his subjects made him as happy in deal-

ing with Early Indian Terracottas as with obscure points in Buddhist Iconography, as happy in treating with any phase of Mughal Painting as in dealing with Hindi Ragmala Texts, with illuminating commentaries on the philology of archaic Hindi words occurring in musical inscriptions. As an Orientalist, with a wide range of subjects he surpassed Professor Sylvain Levi; as a Philologist, he has challenged the works of many authorities, and, as an Historian of Art, his works surpass those of Renan and Maspero. It is unfortunate that the rapid progress of his scholarship took him many miles away from his popular and propagandist essays of his early Swadeshi days, with the wide popular appeal of his lectures reprinted in *Art and Swadeshi* (1911) and his admirable *Essays in Indian National Idealism*, and in his later works he became too much of a mystic and a metaphysician beyond the reach of ordinary individuals, though still exciting the envy and the admiration of scholars. Most of his writings are lit up by a surfeit of breath-taking references and parallel passages from all the philosophical writers of the world, and, sometimes, an interpretation of the symbology of an ordinary Indian Picture or Icon is supported by citations from Kausitaki Brahmana, Plato, and Jalaluddin Rumi, as well as from Homeric epigrams and Coptic Gnostic treatises! His works drew the warm appreciation of Western savants, but Indians have yet to pay their debt of tribute to one of their greatest prophets. Dr. Coomaraswamy is dead, but he will live in the inspiring and shining pages of his writings, the brightest banners symbolizing the supremacy of Indian Culture and Civilization.

## MEETING COOMARASWAMY.

*(Mr. Wilfred Wellock, Birmingham.)*

Dr. Coomaraswamy's writings are difficult to come by here. Prior to 1946 what I have read of them I borrowed from Eric Gill and his friends. These were mostly short works, but they greatly impressed me. They harmonised with my own thinking yet lit it up with shafts of bright light.

It was after these experiences that I discovered while on a lecture tour in the U.S.A. that Coomaraswamy was at the Boston Museum. I got him on the telephone and went to see him. To my astonishment he began to quote me from memory and thereupon fetched several brochures of mine from his shelves. I confess I felt embarrassed. He bubbled over with ideas. It was imperative that the mechanistic, materialistic trends of our times be changed and it was we who believed in creative living who must do it. He begged me to write to this journal and that, get in touch with this person and that—informing me of kindred spirits in France and other European countries. His mind was like a telephone exchange in touch with all the vital spiritual forces everywhere. It was a most impressive conversation. He wanted me to spend the evening with him, but this was impossible and so he loaded me with a number of his smaller writings. The time passed like lightning and I left with my mind like a charged battery. It was a memorable occasion which I shall always treasure.

Altogether Coomaraswamy was a man whose mind was so mature that he was able to transform a most remarkable store of knowledge into rivers and lakes of wisdom from which one could drink with profit and

satisfaction whenever one turned to him. And his phrase stuck. How often have I repeated his now famous saying that "*An artist is not a special kind of person, but every person can be a special kind of artist.*" It now occurs to me that during our long talk in his office in the Boston Museum, he said he felt that the time had come for those who were labouring for a return to creative living which I had suggested to him might be described as a new creative era, should try to contact each other for their mutual edification and understanding, and perhaps try to gather together, if not as a world group of kindred spirits, at least as an area, say of a Continental group, in order to know each other better, to learn what one and another were doing, and perhaps to discuss ways and means of furthering their common purpose.

### IN MEMORIAM—A. K. C.

(*Mr. Marco Pallis, Tibet*)

There is only one kind of tribute worthy of Ananda Coomaraswamy: to put his teaching into practice, to follow the way he pointed to, to renounce whatever seems incompatible with that way, at whatever cost. Each man, to the best of his ability, must do this for himself and his children, in his own house, before ever he can expect others to follow him. Without the force of personal example, precept is an ineffective weapon. Nor must the would-be disciple of Ananda start off by pinning his hopes on public movements, conceived on a national scale; the traditional life, like charity, begins at home, though it does not end there. Moreover, nothing is to be regarded as so small as not to count towards the reintegration in tradition that is

one's aim; especially at the outset, minor questions of formal correctitude count for a great deal towards the task of re-attuning an individuality partially warped, as a result of modernist contacts and influences, to the traditional norms. The worship of a very concrete *murti* may be a relatively external practice, but it is nonetheless a gate into the formless and must logically precede any attempt at meditation on *Brahma Nirguna*. Likewise, the *karma* and *bhakti margas* will have to be traversed, whether slowly or quickly, before the path of pure, unadulterated *jnana* becomes a practicable proposition. What is needed first is for a man to ask himself, whenever a choice of paths lies before him, "Does this agree with the traditional point of view or is it rather connected with the modern profanity?" This method will apply to a man's work, to the things he possesses, to the education of his children, to his clothes and theirs, just as it will do to the correct accomplishment of the family rites and so on—with each form of tradition, whether Muslim, Hindu, or other, though details will vary somewhat, the principle is the same, since all these paths, as Ananda Coomaraswamy himself said, "lead to the same summit."

Let no man presume to invoke the name of Coomaraswamy who, when about to buy something new or to replace something old, forgets the local craftsman and goes and gets a factory-made article just because this happens to be the easier course at present; let not his name be invoked, either, if one still, for one's child, considers English a more important study than the *Shastras*, or if one continues to value Matriculation or a B.A. above *dharma*.

A man who will make a bonfire of all the modern-

istic furniture and ornaments in his house as a sacrifice to *Durga* will have offered incense than which no other smells sweeter in the Mother's nostrils, so says the voice of Ananda Coomaraswamy; and after such a clearance of profane rubbish it will at last be possible to think of replacing it with real things made by the hand of real men, whether new or old. Whoever trains his son to cherish the soil and to work it intelligently, or to practise a handicraft with love, or who refurnishes his house, or builds another, in true Hindu or Muslim style with the help of whatever craftsmen may have survived, thus giving them work instead of only praise, or whoever lives the family life according to the traditional pattern and wears good native clothes free from incongruous admixtures and abstains from letting his head be filled with the trashy sentimentalism of modern literature, or whoever refuses to profane his ears and eyes with the cacophony of the wireless and the erotic falsifications of the cinema, all those indeed who act in some such manner have the right to claim discipleship of Ananda Coomaraswamy to a greater or lesser extent. Examples can be multiplied indefinitely, but these few must suffice in order to show what kind of an attitude is demanded.

And let such people come together: an added strength will accrue to each one from the thought that he is not alone. At the same time no one must try to lean too heavily on the others, for only he who is prepared, if need be, to remain as the only man in the world following the path of *dharma* is worthy to tread that path. *Dharma* itself always will imply two things: on the positive side an activity and on the negative side a renunciation, and both halves are

needed for wholeness of life.

The present writer first got to know Coomaraswamy, well named the Doctor, through having consulted him by letter over some difficult questions connected with Tibetan Buddhism. One thing led to another—how many mistakes would have passed unnoticed but for Ananda's help. We never were fated to meet in the flesh; but the friendship was, if anything, the deeper for that lack of a personal contact. To sum up Ananda Coomaraswamy's qualities as an expounder of the traditional teaching under its many forms would require more than just a few pages. He was a master of analysis, and he could always be trusted to beat the moderns at their own game. He was a master of synthesis, and one who never lost sight of the wood for the trees. He had the gift of tongues in more senses than one; literally, since his accurate knowledge of languages classical or spoken was prodigious, and metaphorically, in that he could make use of the language of all the traditions of the world, past or present, at will, resorting to this one for the purpose of illustrating that, so that at one moment it seemed to be a Christian voice that was speaking, at another a Platonic voice, then again a Hindu or Buddhist one, then it might be a voice belonging to a Sufi or a Redskin: the Scripture has said "all peoples and languages shall praise the Lord;" he was the living exponent of this doctrine.

Once again let it be said: the tribute most worthy of Ananda Coomaraswamy is to put his teaching into practice; no other garland so befits his memory. The price of such a garland, as of a rare pearl, is great; but its flowers are of the kind that will not fade.

## DR. A. K. COOMARASWAMY'S LITERARY CRAFTSMANSHIP.

*(Professor B. S. Mathur, M.A., B.A. (Hons), Kanpur, India.)*

Ruskin has very beautiful ideas about a perennial piece of literature. I cannot but refer my readers to them as I am keen on their appreciation of real literature as we find it in the writings of a sage who is no more with us in his physical garb but who lives in his writings and who through his writings promises to be a source of eternal delight and instruction to his readers. Ruskin writes:

"The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it: so far as he knows no one else can say it. He is bound to say it clearly and melodiously if he may: clearly at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him: this the piece of true knowledge or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever: engrave it on rock, if he could: saying, 'This is the best of me: for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another: my life was as vapour, and is not: but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.' That is his 'writing': it is, in his small human away, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a Book."

What a great wealth in these ideas? A true Book must be a perennial piece of delight and instruction. It can be both, and for ever, indeed, if it is communicated in a simple and forceful fashion. Again what is communicated as a permanent piece of literature

must be a sacred writing, the sum total of one's experience and knowledge which can enable an individual to reveal himself. When he reveals himself he is bound to reveal God that is in him. And so he is generous in imparting sacredness. And this he must call his Book, a record for all and for ever, a thing of beauty and joy for ever which the devouring times cannot find an easy prey and which will ever remain green in our memory and mind. Such a claim, to my mind, is made by the writings of Dr. Coomaraswamy. A student of literature, therefore is justified in presenting a study of Dr. Coomaraswamy's literary craftsmanship while others may think of so many other aspects of Dr. Coomaraswamy for their homage.

I have no hesitation in stating that his writings are for eternity. They have such a deathless spark of sacredness in them. Who can think of forgetting God? Our age might be an age of science. Literature that is sacred and instructive cannot suffer at the hands of science. A philosopher, who has seen life as a whole, who has seen such a wealth of things both in East and in West, and who has tried so ceaselessly and so successfully to unite both, cannot but be remembered for his writings. He shows the best in man and in God. He seems to have made himself sure of both the worlds. Who can forget him? A great synthesis he seems to have arrived at, the synthesis of the human and the divine, the synthesis of the East and the West; indeed, a great divine harmony is his consummation.

This is with reference to the kernel of his philosophy. Now, turn to the garb that he has given to his philosophy. That is simple and effective. Call

that grand and tremendously impressive. What is the secret? Simplicity is united with intensity of thought. And the result can be imagined. We have to think of Dr. Coomaraswamy as a sacred and effective teacher. There is not the end of the story. We have to think of him as a great artist, who knows what he has to say and who says it so simply. Is there any justification to call this simple fashion a literary craftsmanship of the sage?

I must make it clear that to my mind literary craftsmanship consists in simplicity communicated simply and forcefully. I have to thank a philosopher of the West to describe my idea of craftsmanship by borrowing his words with reference to the qualities of a philosopher, who is a spectator of all times and of all existence. According to Dr. Joad, a philosopher must have a sound knowledge of the past and the present, along with two attributes of critical analysis and impressive expression. These gifts a philosopher must have to be a successful philosopher. I say these gifts a literary artist must have along with vision and imagination. I find this combination in Dr. Coomaraswamy. His writings are not all emotion. They have reason, knowledge, vision and imagination, delivered in a simple fashion. Here is my idea of Dr. Coomaraswamy's literary craftsmanship. I have now to refer to his writings to support my thesis that in his writings he is a literary artist and that through his craftsmanship he seems to have known and lived the Art Of Life. And as such he is for eternity a delightful writer.

But it must also be observed that Dr. Coomaraswamy has no set art in his writings. This absence

of so-called art shows the spontaneity of his writings. After all we recognise a genius by his not following any rules. The golden rule of art is that it follows no rule. What is its result? There is naturalness added to genuine wisdom for eternity and for universal appeal. This rule of following no rule shows sincerity, the first and fundamental substance of good writing. The writer or the artist has a certain store of wisdom allowed to him by his experience. This wisdom has granted him utmost moments of joy and bravery to face the struggle for life. His mind is informed and formed as well. He is sincere and sincerely urged to profit the world by his wisdom. He must write. He must create. And all this for mankind. Why should he have the air or art of artificiality? He is just generous and in being generous he is profiting himself generously. Let him be clean of his breast. And so Dr. Coomaraswamy does not hunt for art or artificiality. He is just himself, just divine and just universal and also just delightful and delighting.

There is life behind his writings, there is emotion wedded to reason, and also there is simplicity wedded to intensity. Indeed, a master of synthesis, an artist of harmony and concord, having an air of achievement and of challenge. Dr. Coomaraswamy writes:

“Whatever place is held in the heart of Europe by the love of Dante for his Lady Beatrice, of Paolo for Francesca, of Deirdre for Naoisi, is held in India by the love stories of Rama and Sita, of Padmavati and Ratan Sen, and the love of Radha: in the absolute self-surrender of the human soul in her to the Divine in Krishna is summed up all love. In this consecration of humanity there is no place for the distinction—always foreign to Indian thought—of sacred and profane. But when in love the finite is

brought into the presence of the infinite, when the consciousness of inner and outer is destroyed in the ecstasy of union with one beloved, the moment of realisation is expressed in Indian poetry, under the symbol of the speech of Radha, the leader of the Gopis, with Krishna, the Divine Cowherd. And Krishna is the Lord,—the ascetic, for whom all earthly beauty is a vain thing, and the dancing girl, who is the mistress of every art that charms the senses."

You want sacredness wedded to sensuous joy. You want directness wedded to impressiveness. You want intensity of thoughts communicated in crystal clear words. All this you have in plenty in the passage taken from Dr. Coomaraswamy. And now remember the occasion. Dr. Coomaraswamy is describing an Indian musical party, and he rises to these heights of sublimity and thought and sacredness. How can Dr. Coomaraswamy escape from his personality, from his individuality marked by infinite sacredness and reading? You will have to admit that our sage is not taken with mere sensuousness. He wants to go deeper and he goes undoubtedly. The gain is our own. We have our sacred love, our ancient sacred love, which is our inspiration for ever, interpreted by this intelligent mind who sees nothing wrong in that, in fact, nothing wrong in love itself. Love begins in adoration of the physical beauty and for its maturation or consummation it must develop into a divine love with divinity itself as in the case of Radha and Krishna. So all distinctions of profane and sacred must disappear. Let us have experience and experience will tell its own story of conquest, of final consummation and absorption with God, of the union of finite with infinite, yes, of the union of man with God ultimately. This,

man's salvation, is the end through love. And why not truth itself? Upon reflection it will be clear that this pursuit of beauty through love is identical with pursuit of God through truth, a lesson so beautifully, and successfully taught by Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Coomaraswamy has communicated another precious idea of the great lesson that the West can learn from the East. This lesson of the sacredness of the East, the West must learn. The present moment might go away for ever.

"All this is passing away: when it has gone, men will look back on it with hungry eyes, as some have looked upon the life even of Mediæval Europe, or of Greece. When civilisation has made of life a business it will be remembered that life was once an art: when culture is the privilege of bookworms, it will be remembered that it was once a part of life itself, not something achieved in stolen movements of relief, from the serious business of being an engine-driver, a clerk, or a Governor."

Here is a challenge and warning to both—East and West. The West has to learn the spirituality of the East and the East has to stop imitation of the West, lest life should be a mere business and not an art as it should be. Art of life has to be else it will not be lived in the light of the teachings of God. Man is selfish and will go on adding selfishness to his already brimming stock of vices.

These words of Dr. Coomaraswamy are quite memorable. They are unique in thought contents, brevity and aptness. It is plain that Dr. Coomaraswamy is for culture and art, for beauty and truth and sublimation of emotions in the light of reason and culture. He has significantly referred to moments stolen from the serious business of being an engine-

driver, a clerk, or a Governor. Life requires the work of an engine-driver, a clerk, or a Governor. But that is not the whole story of life. Not even the fundamental story of life. There must be a serious attempt to live the art of life in harmony and absence of selfishness and business that leads to, and is the result of, selfishness itself. No question of stealing moments. There must be a set plan to create an art of life. This plan will consummate in joy and universal benefit. He seems to exclaim with Kabir:

I laugh when I hear that the fish in the  
water is thirsty:

You do not see that the Real is in your home, and  
you wander from forest to forest listlessly!

Here is the truth! Go where you will, to Banaras  
or to Mathura: if you do not find your Soul, the  
world is unreal to you.

Perhaps he is not so gentle as Kabir. He does not merely laugh. He thinks, and critically, of the vain search of material benefits in life by the West and so he exclaims, with all force, that it is time for all of us to stop this mad round of life. Truth of soul must be out. He says nothing new here, but says it forcefully and one may hope his utterance will have its result. Then there will be no discrimination between man and man. The divine origin of man will proclaim itself that all over the world there is one race, the human race, and one blood, the human blood. Like Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Coomaraswamy might say with justification:

"I am to create a new order of humanity here, who are sincere believers in God and care nothing for the world."

Yes, there ought to be fearlessness in virtue and sacredness.

Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy appears in the role of a world reformer for peace and culture. He is Indian in his outlook but at the same time he cannot forget humanity, he cannot lose sight of his mission for harmony. He writes:

"The world may be likened to a vast, as yet unordered garden, having diverse soils and aspects, some watered, some arid, some plain, some mountain; the different parts of which should properly be tended by different gardeners, having experience of diverse qualities of soil and aspect; but certain ones have seized upon the plots of others, and attempted to replace the plants natural to those plots, with others more acceptable or profitable to themselves. We have not to consider only the displaced gardeners who naturally do not admire and are not grateful for the changes introduced into their plots: but to ask whether these proceedings are beneficial to the owner of the garden, for whom the gardeners work. Who is this owner but the folk of the world of the future, which is ever becoming the present? Shall they be glad or sorry if uniformity has replaced diversity, if but one type of vegetation is to be found within their garden, flourishing perhaps in one part, but sickly in another: what of the flowers that might have flourished in that other part had they not been swept away?"

There is no indignation in spite of the utter and dangerous displacement. He does not think in terms of the displaced but certainly he thinks of the natural benefit that must accrue to the coming generations. There must be something for eternity, for people to come. Life must be eternal: it must be a veritable progress. If there is diversity it must be allowed to exist. All domination and exploitation must

stop. There must be a perfect atmosphere for growth. Let there be nothing binding. This is his message. Note in what a forceful fashion it has been communicated. There is nothing of exaggeration in holding this piece as a memorable piece, showing Dr. Coomaraswamy's literary and artistic qualities. Vision, vividness and thought are united in delivering his message. There is beauty of language, image and vision. And there is directness that is distinct and pointed. There is no escape from his meaning, from his message, if we have intelligence and will to exercise. All praise to him as a master craftsman in literature.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

*(Professor G. E. G. Catlin, London.)*

About Ananda Coomaraswamy as critic and apostle of Indian art I am not competent to speak. But this I can and would say, that all of us, in these days of specialization, so unlike the days of Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe, are under an immeasurable debt to such men as this son of Ceylon, and father of the Indian Renaissance, who brought together into one integrated life the gifts of the philosopher, the student of art, the man of letters, the theologian. It is an impoverishment of our age that we have too few such men. Coomaraswamy with Albert Schweitzer are among the great exceptions. And even in the field of politics it is interesting to note that Coomaraswamy like Bertrand Russell, had the vision to insist that the remedy for the evils of mechanization lies in the

reversal of the trend towards governmental and industrial centralization. It lies in a world government with limited objectives on the one side and in devolution and the development of local and village industry on the other.

Like Gandhiji, Ananda Coomaraswamy was an interpreter of East to West and, be it added, of West to East. As such he, with Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindu are among the designers of the garden of a world culture in which earth alone can grow healthily the flowers of a world community. Here too he also made his contribution in pointing out, not where the great faiths of the world are in error, but where they have all in their various measures seized upon underlying and central truth, and have, as M. Jacques Maritain has pointed out, a genuine mystic vision.

Child of Ceylon and England and yet so widely thought of as a great Indian in himself, when Dr. Coomaraswamy came to America he expressed a unification of cultures, not by the dilution of each but by the scholarly appreciation of all. He can ill be spared. Now let us search for his successor who can carry on his work and express to the West the thought and feeling of renascent Asiatic nationalism. This it is our duty and privilege to encourage, not as an exclusive Asiatic racialism but as a contribution of each member, each with peculiar gifts, to what Mazzini acclaimed as the concert of mankind, the total orchestra of human genius. Let us expect the day of a strong China, a rich India, a renascent Indonesia; and hope that these lands will receive world interpreters sympathetic, talented and renowned as Coomaraswamy.

## ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

*(Mr. Lawrence Hyde, Surrey, England.)*

It is today widely accepted that the realisation of world unity depends upon our success in harmonizing and reconciling the Eastern and the Western elements in human culture. The Oriental genius for achieving an inner relation to the Centre must be as fully acknowledged as our Western genius for mastering the problems which are presented to us on the Periphery. Or quite simply, Repose and Action must be experienced as one.

We do not know enough about the physical, psychological and spiritual constitution of human beings to say with any precision what exactly is called for to produce that exceptional type of mind which is equally responsive to Eastern and Western wisdom. Obviously in the case of that distinguished philosopher Sri Aurobindo his notable capacity for understanding European thought owes a great deal to his education in England. In the case of Coomaraswamy there was a still deeper factor involved, since he was of Anglo-Tamil parentage. He carried within his very blood-stream racial elements which were propitious to playing the part of an interpreter between East and West.

Needless to say, this biological fusion might easily enough have proved the source of wasteful tension and conflict. But fortunately it found expression in an extreme sensitiveness both to Oriental and Occidental values, as well as a remarkable capacity for relating them to one another. He was able to master Western science with the same ease with which he dealt with the problems of Eastern art and philosophy, while he had also the precious gift of seeing them in their

proper relation to one another. He thus appeared as a distinguished representative of the emergent type of thinker whose ideas and actions will express the spirit of a world culture, and not merely that of one of the traditional forms of civilization.

Representatives of this essentially twentieth-century tendency are of course to be met with everywhere; for we are participating, in confusion and agony, in the birth of a new world. But amongst them there are very few who have worked in this field with such spiritual and intellectual distinction as A. K. Coomaraswamy. For he brought to the task a remarkable combination of qualities: exceptional subtlety of mind, delicate perception, the power of philosophical synthesis, and most valuable of all, a rare purity and humility.

My acquaintance with his writings is far too slight to justify me in attempting a general review of his work. But I should like to say something about the very important contribution which he made to the cause of universal religion. No modern thinker has brought out more decisively the nature and significance of the true Wisdom Religion, or what we are now accustomed to refer to as the Perennial Philosophy. What he took his stand upon in this field was what may be described as basic metaphysics. To the Oriental within him this aspect of knowledge was congenitally sympathetic, for it is an almost elementary assumption in the East that fundamental truth is to be sought for beyond the discrepant formulations of partial philosophies.

Yet his ideas brought with them no inconsiderable challenge even to Oriental philosophers, some of whom were somewhat dismayed by his brilliant expo-

sition of the thesis that at the root of both Hinduism and Buddhism there lay the same basic doctrine which the scholars of both schools had failed to interpret correctly.\*

Of greater interest to us in the West, however, was his courteous but uncompromising exposure of the limited conception of Eastern teachings which is entertained by the majority of Occidental philosophers and theologians. Thus in discussing Hinduism he does not hesitate to affirm that "it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that a faithful account of Hinduism might well be given in the form of a categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it, alike by European scholars and by Indians trained in our modern sceptical and evolutionary modes of thought." And he proceeds to show how different are the realities from the transmogrification which they have undergone in the minds of European thinkers whose vision has been restricted and warped by their obstinate attachment to the historical creeds and systems which they had been brought up to think of as absolute.

Not less impressive was his capacity to reveal the spirit of the Perennial Philosophy by learned and discriminating quotations from the writings of the Platonists and the Christian and Mahomedan mystics. And by so doing he brought out in a decisive fashion the universal character of the coming Faith. It was,

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\* 'The more superficially one studies Buddhism, the more it seems to differ from the Brahmanism in which it originated; the more profound our study, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish Buddhism from Brahmanism, or to say in what respects, if any, Buddhism is really unorthodox.' *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 45.

as he was aware, pioneer work. But he looked forward to the time when there should be written a *Summa* of the *Philosophia Perennis*, "impartially based on all orthodox sources whatever." Only the unimaginative will believe that the claims of such a compilation could become accepted except at the cost of a long and persistent struggle with reactionary tendencies. But the truth must in the end prevail. And amongst those who have contributed to this adjustment of our vision Ananda K. Coomaraswamy must always occupy an outstanding place. For he not only experienced truth as an Oriental, but was capable also of interpreting it to us in the West in terms which are perfectly congenial to our minds.

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### DR. A. K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Basil Gray, Keeper of Oriental Antiquities,  
British Museum, London*)

Death seems often to claim a man just as his life-work is coming to full fruition; and it is so with Dr. Coomaraswamy who has recently died in the United States. For forty years he has been engaged in reconciling the West with Indian art and thought, and now 1947, year of India's political independence, is likely also to see dispersed the last vestiges of the "smoke clouds which," as Sir William Rothenstein put it, "had all too long obscured the splendid achievements of Indian sculpture." The writer's exhibition of Indian Art at the Royal Academy will probably mark the end of that particular prejudice, and it is to Coomaraswamy above all that our gratitude for this is due. It is sad to think that the occasion cannot now be enhanced by his presence and appreciation. Those

who are aware of this debt must pay their tribute to him.

Born in Ceylon seventy years ago and educated in England at the University of London, he returned to his native land to work in the Mineralogical Survey, but after three years came again to this country, with a message. He had perceived the last flickering of the mediaeval arts of India in Ceylon. Starting from a protest against the destructive effects of industrialism and the impact of European art on Indian culture, in which he naturally found himself allied with the movement in this country in which C. R. Ashbee and Lethaby were prominent, he passed beyond this to regions of thought and interest in which he found the less organised culture of the United States with greater social freedom a more favourable atmosphere; but he remained to the end turned towards the older civilisation of Europe especially as represented by the mediaeval German mystics, in his search for an idea of life of universal application.

Coomaraswamy continued to seek an integration of life and thought, of art and philosophy and of Eastern and Western aesthetic and theology. This unity of the spirit was his answer to the disintegrating forces in modern life and society, consciousness of which made him a rather lonely figure in his later years, as he lived his own retired life, in spite of honours given to the doyen of Indian studies in three continents. Personal contact showed him still as perceptive as ever of quality, and enjoying to the full the carefully chosen collections of Indian art which he had built up at the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston during the last thirty years. He produced elaborate and scholarly catalogues of these during the twenties amply illus-

trated and, as in all his writing, directing the reader to the significance of the objects described both in their historical context and also especially as expression of ideas. From his earliest writings on Sinhalese art in 1908, he always sought the *rasa*, the essential "passion" which is behind every true work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, or sculpture, and in an integrated society finding simultaneous and complementary expression through each art.

Coomaraswamy was not primarily a literary scholar though his translations of vernacular poems and technical passages from Sanskrit were needed in view of their neglect by the professed literary scholars. The list of his publications in all its copious variety shows him as the pioneer in a largely unmapped field: he provided a general "map" in his excellent *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, and views of the land he pioneered in volumes of reproduction published by the India Society (of which he was one of the founders in 1910) and by the Boston Museum, and, above all, in those united to a most valuable text in the two volumes of *Rajput Painting* published by the Oxford Press in 1916, which marked an epoch in the appreciation of Kangra painting in the West. He was a man of striking appearance with his strong body, perceptive eye, and quick understanding, bent to his life's purpose for which he was uniquely placed.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, K.C.I.E., K.C.S.I.,  
Madras*).

The multiform contacts between Ceylon and India have always been intimate and have resulted, among

other things, in a lively and continuous interchange of ideas, literary and artistic. From the days of the Ramayana and through the Buddhist epoch, Lanka played a notable part in the history of India and vice versa.

The middle of the last century witnessed the activities of three men who did a great deal to foster the unity of outlook and the friendliness between Ceylon and India and who, in their several ways, contributed to promote the cause of Indian culture. All the three—Sir P. Arunachalam and his brother, Sir P. Ramanathan as well as Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy—were natives of Jaffna which was practically an offshoot of the Tamil land; but every one of them played a great part in the life and—politics of Ceylon. The literary and educational work of Sir P. Arunachalam and Sir P. Ramanathan are well known to every one in the south of India. Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy not only made a great position for himself but he bequeathed to India and the world of Art his son, Ananda Coomaraswamy.

The generation to which Coomaraswamy's father belonged adopted European ways and educational methods in pursuance of which, young Coomaraswamy was sent to England for education very early in life and he wound up his academic career with a Doctorate of Science in the London University. Returning to Ceylon, he accepted office as Director of the Mineralogical Survey of the Island but the claims of literature and art were paramount and he devoted his life to the study and elucidation of Indian Art in its various aspects. His equipment was many-sided and is proved by his Fellowship both of the Geological and the Linnean Societies. As happened in the cases of



**Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy**  
(From a sketch in "Christmas Debates" edited by Mr. Lorenz)



**Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy**

Tagore and of J. C. Bose, so it was with Coomaraswamy; and his Indian contemporaries began to recognise his merits only after he was made a Research Fellow in Persian and Indian Art in that centre of intellectual activity. Both in that capacity and as Vice-President of the India Society, he did pioneering work in explaining to the English and American public the meaning and significance of the artistic output of India.

His services were even more fundamental. Macaulay had held up to scorn the literature and the legends of India and European connoisseurs had damned Indian Art with faint praise. It should be remembered that the traditional arts and crafts of India have survived the impacts of invasion and vandalism; and in various corners of India, masons and sculptors are still to be found, especially in the Indian States, who continue the vital tradition of the immemorial past. Lord Curzon did more than any Indian for the preservation of the monuments of the country and unfortunately, educated India, in the early years of the 19th century, was almost studiously neglectful of its heritage. The arousing of the national consciousness with regard to the ancient and mediaeval art of India was largely the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy and E. B. Havell; and credit must also go to Abanindranath Tagore and his followers including Nandalal Bose, in effecting the renaissance of Indian painting by drawing inspiration from Ajanta. Happily such ignoring of our Art is a thing of the past and India is now on the threshold of a new age. The new nationalistic movement has indeed created a revolution against the imitation of the West.

Combining in himself a deep knowledge of Bud-

dhistic philosophical and artistic masterpieces and those of the Aryan and Dravidian intellect and spirit, Dr. Coomaraswamy started a movement for national education in Lanka in the vernaculars as an essential preliminary to the revival of Indian culture. He lectured in American and European centres on Indian and Sinhalese Art. He studied the methods of the Indian craftsman and wrote on his technique. He spoke on Art and Swadeshi and analysed the Visvakarma legend in collaboration with Sister Nivedita and produced excellent examples of Indian Art exhibiting the treasures of India and Ceylon. The name of Dr. Coomaraswamy is especially associated with the study and exposition of what has been designated "Rajput Painting." The term is perhaps misleading for the reason that, as pointed out by Mr. Havell, although the traditions of Hindu painting were specially formative in Rajputana, yet they were, by no means, exclusively Rajput. Travancore, Cochin, Pudukkotta, Kashmir, Bengal and Gujerat produced their own Schools of Art which owed their inspiration to the same influences that operated in Rajputana and all Hindu painters, even when painting on paper, have followed the technique of Mural painting which was a feature of the Hindu Chitrasala. Whereas the Musalman painter was concerned mainly with the life of the Court and the Camp, the Hindu artist was not only a chronicler of rural and scenic aspects but essentially a religious teacher clothing the mysteries of religion in familiar garb and introducing into his paintings the events of daily life. The so-called Rajput painting is, in fact, a sequel to the Buddhist frescoes wherein the Indian artists displayed perfect acquaintance with the intricacies of the effects of light,

and Coomaraswamy himself has thus described Indian Art: "This vigorous archaic outline is the basis of its language. Wiry, distinct and sharp as that golden rule of art and life desired by Blake: sensitive, reticent and tender, it perfectly reflects the severe self-control and sweet serenity of Indian life."

Dr. Coomaraswamy specialised in the exposition of Hindu painting but this was not his only sphere of activity. He published his own reading of Lord Buddha and his gospel. He tried to effect a new approach to the Vedas and he wrote on the Transformation of Nature in Art, in addition to compiling a sumptuous catalogue of the Indian collection in the Museum at Boston. All art is one although its manifestations may be many; and it is therefore not surprising that Dr. Coomaraswamy lectured and wrote on the art of dance as illustrated by the Dance of Shiva and Kali and Krishna and collaborated with an Andhra expert in a publication on *Abhinaya* entitled *The Mirror of Gesture*. His work was ever characterised by a keen faculty of discrimination as well as the utmost delicacy of feeling. Behind and above all his activities there was a passionate devotion to Indian aspirations and an ambition to create in the country of his origin, a devotion to those impulses which made India the paradise of Fine Art in the days of the epic past. The interpretation to the European and American world of the essential and inseparable symbolism of Indian painting and sculpture and the explanation of the inner spirit and rationale of Indian Art were the main contributions of Dr. Coomaraswamy; and reading one of his works *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* published in 1943, one realises with what concentrated enthusiasm he

applied himself to his self-imposed duty of interpreting Indian thought-forms such as those personifying the allegories of Nataraja dancing the Cosmic dance, Krishna as the protector of his flock capturing the souls of his devotees with the music of his flute and the eternal virgin, Kanya Kumari, waiting for her union with the Lord.

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## AN APPRECIATION OF A PALI BUDDHIST SCHOLAR

*(Miss I. B. Horner, M.A., London.)*

To Ananda K. Coomaraswamy the term "genius" may be aptly and truly applied. His devotion to truth and the search for it was the guiding motive and master passion of his intense intellectual life. To this end he brought to bear immense and unrelenting energy, an exact and scrupulous scholarship, a trained and disciplined mind which could be either analytic or synthetic as occasion demanded, and perhaps above all, and in consequence of these factors, his knowledge, which was supremely well organised, grew to vast encyclopaedic proportions. So much so, that there is probably no one person alive who could do justice to the many branches of his critical or constructive mental activity.

He culled his knowledge from a variety of sources for, owing to his remarkable gift for languages, the literature of many lands was accessible to him; he had no need to rely on translations, but could make his own, and a splendid translator he was. His works are filled with his own renderings, it may be of isolated passages or of a word, but whatever it is he always seems to me to "hit the target"—and in the language

of archery he found much symbolic value and content<sup>1</sup>—so it is all the more to be regretted that he never made a translation of any complete work.

There never seemed to be a question one might ask him on, for example, geology or botany, on India or America, on art or architecture, on philosophy or religion, on folklore or symbolism, to which he could not supply a detailed, interesting and original answer. And this was usually characterised by a way he had of lifting the question to some higher sphere of thought and showing that it had connections with other, and sometimes, surprising subjects. I can only describe this particular aptitude of his by saying that under his touch knowledge seemed to fall together; pieces of knowledge no longer appeared as separate items, but came into line with one another as related parts of one whole. That is to say, often surface differences vanished, leaving a similarity and sometimes a unity of thought in their place. He showed how one thing fitted in with another, and how it might be only the modes of expression or other symbols that varied but which, deriving primarily from figures of thought rather than from figures of speech, were pointing, in all related aspects of the complex pattern, fundamentally and universally in the same direction. The underlying significance a scholar can discern in a collection of data and the doctrine he can perceive in this data and can formulate from it are of the utmost importance. Otherwise the data must remain fragmentary and relatively unimportant. Coomaraswamy was well equipped to synthesise the data he found scattered

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1. *The Symbolism of Archery, Ars Islamica*, vol. X, 1943.

throughout the great religious, philosophical, scientific and poetical literature of the world. He was a master of putting together what belongs together.

Thus, to cite but one instance, he came to realise that the catchwords of folklore turn into the signs and symbols of the *Philosophia Perennis*. The two are then seen to have one common aim: the finding of the Waters of Life, the living waters of deathlessness or immortality. "The signs and symbols of the Quest for life which have so often survived in oral tradition, long after they have been rationalised or romanticised by literary artists, are our best clue to what must have been the primordial form of the one spiritual language of which, as Jeremias says, 'the dialects are recognisable in the divers existing cultures.'<sup>1</sup> Or again, at the end of his brilliant article on "The Sea"<sup>2</sup>—a symbol which interested him profoundly, after drawing on Brahmanical, Buddhist, Greek, Christian and Islamic sources, he wrote: "The point is, rather that such collations as have been made above illustrate a single case of the general proposition that there are scarcely any, if any, of the fundamental doctrines of any orthodox tradition that cannot as well be supported by the authority of many or all of the other orthodox traditions, or in other words, by the unanimous tradition of the *Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*."

Thus it was that in his approach to Buddhism Coomaraswamy "traced back beyond their first representation in Buddhist iconography through the aniconic period of the Brahmanical Vedas, even into the Rig Vedic period itself,"<sup>1</sup> the significance of such

1. *Symplegades* (Studies.....in Honor of George Sarton, 1946), p. 465.

2. *The Sea* (*India Antiqua*, 1947), p. 94.

symbols as the Tree of Life, the Pillar of the World, the Lotus-Throne, the Earth-Lotus and the Word-Wheel and showed that "they represent a universal Indian symbolism."<sup>1</sup>

In bringing Early Buddhism into a relation with its great predecessors in Indian literature, Coomaraswamy has rendered it inestimable service. From now on it can no longer be regarded as a code or system of "mere morality" and nothing more. It is far greater than that. From now on Early Buddhism must be seen as part and parcel of the *Philosophia Perennis et Universalis*; and it is not too much to say that it has been accorded this, its rightful place, by the far-seeingness of Coomaraswamy. He regards the Buddha as a Solar Hero, priest and king who, in his quest for the Deathless for whose successful termination he must reach the Further Shore at the back of the Sun (and the Sun-door is a gate to Life), sets rolling the Wheel, the *brahmacakka* or *dharmacakka*. The Wheel is both the guardian of the Further Shore (the Indian version of the Other World), and also that which gives access to it; but to gain access the Hero must set the wheel rolling and then pass through its spokes or "rays" with all speed. The speed with which the Hero (or Thief) must pass through the Clashing Rocks, or their variants,<sup>5</sup> is transmuted in the Perennial Philosophy into the flash of Enlightenment. This comes, in common parlance, all of a sudden, and is in contrast with the long long faring along the Way, "much as the sudden release of the arrow contrasts with the archer's long training."<sup>6</sup>

4. Foreword by W. E. Clark to *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Harvard, 1935.

5. *Symplegades*.

6. *Time and Eternity, Artibus Asiae*, 1947. p. 45.

Coomaraswamy saw much meaning in the Buddha's epithets, and has left some posthumous material on them which we hope will be published in due course. Three that may be aligned in connection with the Solar Hero are "Kinsman of the Sun," "Giver of the Deathless" and "Wheel-turner" (*cakkavattin*). None of these epithets can be fully comprehended if the others are left out of account; all are related; and any attempt to explain one would be incomplete without some consideration of the others. As I have said, under Coomaraswamy's masterly scrutiny knowledge "falls together."

This is true of Early Buddhism not only when it is regarded as a separate and individual system or set of teachings; it is also true of Early Buddhism when it is regarded as a historical development of the Vedas and Upanishads, or when regarded as having material that indubitably belongs to the Perennial Philosophy. Coomaraswamy has indeed thrown a great light on Pali Buddhism, illuminating these three aspects of it. He takes the texts as they stand<sup>7</sup> and he quotes freely from them. He does not think that because a word or a phrase appears at first sight to be obscure, this must be the result of a scribe's error which is therefore in need of emendation. He sets himself the task of finding out what it does mean (rather than what it might or ought to mean), often by drawing on comparable words, phrases or ideas which he has found in other literature.

It would be impossible here to assess all his findings connected with Early Buddhism. It must suffice to refer to two of the themes which he thought of

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7. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 48.

fundamental importance for its right understanding and which, since he saw Buddhism as a whole, are not unrelated the one to the other. The one is the conviction, which Coomaraswamy had long held and with ever growing tenacity, that Early Buddhism recognises *two selves*, in dramatic contrast with each other; the one composite and mortal, the other single and immortal,<sup>8</sup> and that it is the One Self the many are to find,<sup>8</sup> “‘That One’ who makes himself manifold and in whom all beings again ‘become one.’”<sup>9</sup> For there could hardly be a greater mistake or a greater falsification of Early Buddhism—unless it be the misconception that shrouds the word *nibbana*, “a Buddhist key-word, than which, perhaps, no other has been so much misunderstood”<sup>10</sup>—than to say that it is a doctrine which teaches “no-self,” “no-soul.” For all that is meant is that the five *khandhas*, the “psycho-physical existent,”<sup>10</sup> is not my Self; or, in other words, “misery, mutability, un-Self-ishness (*dukkha, anicca, anatta*) are characteristics of all composite things, all that is not my-Self,”<sup>10</sup> and in contrast to which Self is stable, *thitatta*, and simple or incomposite, *asamkhata*.<sup>11</sup>

What then is this Self which is all that not-self is not? Coomaraswamy’s answer is that, in one of its aspects, it is the Buddha, not the historical man and teacher, called Gotama, but the First Principle: “The ‘Buddha’ and ‘Great Person,’ Arhat,’ ‘Brahma-become’ and ‘God of Gods’ of the Pali texts is himself the

8. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 58; and *Time and Eternity*, p. 39, n. 19.

9. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 73.

10. *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*, by A.K.C. and I. B. Horner, Introduction, Part II

11. *Time and Eternity*, p. 38, 40.

Spirit<sup>12</sup> (*atman*) and Inner Man of all beings.....the Buddha in Brahma, Prajapati, the Light of Lights, Fire or Sun, or by whatever other name the older books refer to the First Principle; and.....insofar as the Buddha's 'life' and deeds are described, it is the doings of Brahma as Agni and Indra that are retold."<sup>13</sup> This is the second of the themes we can refer to here of whose truth Coomaraswamy was convinced and on which he insisted. In other words, the Buddha, the Awakened One, is not only one and the same "descent" as Agendrau, Krishna, Moses and Christ, whose birth is eternal; he is also to be identified, as he identified himself, with the Eternal Law (*dhamma sanantana, akalika*) which, "synonymous with the Truth, is the ultimate authority and 'King of kings.' It is with this ultimate, timeless and temporal, transcendent and immanent authority that the Buddha identified himself, that Self in which he has taken refuge: 'he who sees the Dhamma sees me, he who sees me sees the Dhamma.' One of the most impressive of the Buddhist books is called the Dhamapada, "Footprints of the Law;" it is a chart and guide-book for those who walk in the Way of the Law, which is also the Way of Brahma or Brahma-faring, and 'that old road was followed formerly by the All-Awakened.' The Buddhist words for Way and seeking, with the Self as object, both imply the following of tracks or footprints. But these tracks end when the shore of the Great Sea is reached .....The way prescribed is one of self-naughting, virtue and contemplation, walking alone with Brahma;

12. See also *Some Pali Words*, under *Atta*.

13. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 73.

but when the end of the 'long road' has been reached, whether here or hereafter, there remains only the 'plunge' into the Immortal, into Nirvana, into that fathomless Ocean that is an image at once of Nirvana, Dhamma and the Buddha himself."<sup>14</sup>

This comparatively long passage is quoted at length for to me it is a compendium and a summary of Coomaraswamy's views of the fundamentals of Early Buddhism. It appears in a work that has been published posthumously, and in whose preparation I had the privilege of collaborating: Coomaraswamy wrote the Introductions, we both chose which passages we wished to include, and in the main I translated them, while all the time letters and postcards sailed and flew across the Atlantic which so unhappily divided us. But he did not live to see the proofs of this book, and for help in reading them I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Coomaraswamy.

In the end Coomaraswamy got to the philosophical position where the Buddha as the Freedman—freed from the hobble of Death and freed from all inconsistency and mutability (*anicca*), from "all the ill that is denoted by the word 'mortality,'" <sup>15</sup> the conqueror of Mara, who is the hunter and trapper of those Buddhist stories which have a Tar-baby and "stick-fast" motif<sup>16</sup>—is Dhamma-become and Brahma-become, escaping to this Deathless state when he "recollects himself."<sup>17</sup>

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14. *Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha*, Introduction. Part II. 6. 23.
  15. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 50.
  16. *A Note on the Stick-fast Motif*, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 57, No. 224, April-June, 1944.
  17. *Recollection, Indian and Platonic*, *Supplement to the Journal of the American Oriental Society*, No. 3, April-June, 1944.

Like these, he is timeless and without duration; he transcends the aeons; they call him "awake" (*buddha*) who discerns the aeons, the flux in which they fall and rise (Suttanipata 517).<sup>18</sup>

The Pali canon presents little systematic account of the concepts it uses or the teachings it wishes to convey, unless these be of a moral order. The answer to a metaphysical or philosophical problem presented by one passage must often be sought, and found, in another; and the significance of terms and ideas can often only be grasped by collating the different passages where the same terms and ideas occur. Coomaraswamy, ranging widely and with profound intelligence, over the huge body of literature that constitutes the Pali canon, has done a remarkable amount to bring together citation after citation bearing on the same topic. Such collations may be found throughout several of his writings on Buddhism. They add immeasurably to our sounder knowledge and acuter vision of a subject on which he never failed to shed new light.

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

(*Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Calcutta*)

Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy's voice was that of the spiritual conscience of man. This voice had become practically inarticulate in the age into which he was born. Materialism in its Christian aspect, an ill-employed legacy of the antithesis of body and spirit, had blotted out man's higher knowledge, with the achievements and accretions of science in the service

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18. *Time and Eternity*, p. 38 ff.

of industry. As the Spirit had become hidden its Form could not be seen. There is no Form unless it is informed by the Spirit. This is its manifestation. Dr. Coomaraswamy was a "Seer." He saw the goal and recognized its many manifestations all over the world in its Form, in the art of man. His vision made him see through each of them its source whence all the forms and works of art originate. He went straight towards the Light.

Science which had given him his training made his tools sharp and precise. They were, moreover, doubly sensitized by his parentage and education by which he was at home in the East as much as in the West. While he criticised the impact of Western materialism on the East and the eagerness by which it was accepted, he saw at the same time on an altogether higher level the essential similarity of East and West. That is how at the beginning of his unerring, unremitting work of forty years, he wrote on Mediaeval Sinhalese Art and translated into English part of the Elder Edda. His mind encompassed the sum total of Tradition, in the East particularly in India; it ranged from ancient Greece, the world of Islam and that of Mediaeval Europe to the present situation. Measured against his knowledge the modern mind confronted him in its abnormal shape, estranged from Tradition; the modern mind, a purely Western phenomenon functioning without spiritual impulse. This abnormal position had consolidated from the days of the Renaissance, the age of the self-assertion of man's personality and embraced a chaos of expressed idiosyncracies, such as "Romantic hieroglyphs," "art for art's sake" and totalitarian discipline. All these are stop gaps; the zest and virtuosity in their appre-

ciation is to fill the void caused by the estrangement of man from the Spirit and from perfection.

India, where the traditional form of life and art survives to this day, owes to Dr. Coomaraswamy not only a comprehensive statement of her art and thought. This statement is illumined by the light which is in the contents as much as in their presentation. It clarifies to modern men his abnormal position, his estrangement from his Self, from Tradition, whereby he has become an outsider who has forfeited his birthright.

Dr. Coomaraswamy's teaching and preaching are valid on the highest level and pertain to every sphere, intellectual, artistic and moral. Their validity inheres in the sense of value which Dr. Coomaraswamy testified in front of all works of art, in front of all work and thought of man. Weighed by an immense knowledge and erudition his scales registered no other weight but which thought and form have with reference to Ultimate Perfection.

This 'normal' valuation could not brook the aesthetician's sensual approach nor could it tolerate naturalism in art. While the latter has had its day and has almost passed away, the former has its adherents. Naturalism in art was a byproduct of the scientific attitude in its earlier phases while aestheticism belongs to its psychological phase; both these contrary attitudes are symptoms of man's estrangement from his Self whereby he views, as only an outsider can, the surface of things and their behaviour.

The theory and content of art and not its appearance were the avowed objectives and guides of Dr. Coomaraswamy's quest. They formed an integral quest of his ever widening ever intensifying know-

ledge. He carried with grace its ever increasing weight. It gave felicity to his diction, so that the clarity of illumination shines through his deathless work.

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## I MEET ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

[The following is an interview Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, M.A., PhD, D.Sc., Professor of Economics, Annamalai University, South India, had with Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy at Boston shortly before the renowned scholar's death taken from the *Times of Ceylon* with the author's permission.]

On reaching Boston, I telephoned the Museum of Fine Arts for Dr. Coomaraswamy, but was told that he had not come to the Museum that day because of a slight indisposition.

On phoning him at his residence he said he was sorry that he was not feeling well, but was kind enough to suggest that we go for a drive and have a discussion in his car, if I "promised to ask no biographical details," for Coomaraswamy is one of the most modest of men.

I had met Coomaraswamy once before when he delivered a most learned lecture before the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art to an admiring but lost audience but on seeing him I was re-impressed by his slim and stately figure of six feet two inches, a crop of flowing white hair, a clear olive complexion, a prominent nose, and a short grey beard—a combination of Mahatma Gandhi and Bernard Shaw. While Mrs. Coomaraswamy (Mrs. Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy), his brilliant Argentine wife, who is a linguist and a scholar in her own rights, sat at the wheel, Dr. Coomaraswamy and I discussed various things.

As that morning's newspapers were full of Pakistan—it was a few days before Mountbatten announced the plan for partition—I asked him what he thought of it. "I suppose partition is inevitable," he said. "Perhaps it would be better if India were divided into a number of independent states or entities for the present, if a sufficient number of subjects are reserved for the central government. As for a corridor between Eastern and Western Pakistan, it is simply fantastic and impossible. Looking at our Moslem problem objectively, I must say that Moslem grievances are not legitimate."

"What about the Princes?" I wanted to know. "I am not against the Princes," he was emphatic. "Ask them to live up to our traditional *Raja Dharma*. It is true we have only a few Indian Princes living up to the classical ideals of monarchy, like the late Maharaja of Mysore. My plan would be to let the Indian Princes rule, so long as they behave themselves, judged by the canons of Indian rulership. And if they don't come up to the mark, why, just throw them overboard. The trouble with the Indian Princes today is that they do not know their responsibilities, because they are not educated in their own culture. Once the British leave they will not have to pretend to be Anglo-Indians. If they behave as true Hindus or Moslems they can establish successful and popular administrations."

We then discussed the recent piece of legislation of the Madras Government permitting Harijans to enter Hindu temples. Dr. Coomaraswamy was in favour of the legislation, though he added that nobody in India understands the real and classical significance and objectives of the Hindu caste system. "If anybody

understood this institution he would know that every *Hindu is born casteless*. And a man can only be a Brahmin if he has proved himself to be one. According to this definition I wonder whether there are many Brahmins left in India. Caste is not to be based on birth—was never intended to be so—for if a man becomes an engineer he must be called a *Sudra* and if he becomes a trader he must be called *Vaishya*. I would like to see not the abolition of caste, but the intensification of caste in this direction. In this sense, only the discoverer of truth, the creative artist, and the teacher can be *Brahmins*; and not the Brahmin cooks, the Brahmin clerks, and all the other so-called Brahmins."

If I understand Dr. Coomaraswamy aright, he stands for the abolition of caste as it is today. He deplored the abolition of the Departments of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies in Indian colleges and universities, as well as the great importance given of late to technological studies. He said he was shocked to find that not even ten per cent. of the Indian students coming to the United States on Government of India scholarships were pursuing cultural and humanistic studies. He then said, "Every student seems to be studying chemical engineering. I suppose they will make India a storehouse of explosives! I have met several Indian students, but they seem to bring nothing to this country. Not an iota of Indian culture. They are ignorant of their own country's heritage. They wake up only after coming here and then they learn when it is too late to learn or understand their own culture. How can these students understand India? They are like unorganised barbarians, coming here trying to

learn the American trick, which is beneath contempt.

I am against the concept of raising the standard of living endlessly. There will never be a possibility of contentment. Life is larger than bath tubs, radios and refrigerators. I am afraid the higher the standard of living the lower the culture. Why, more than fifty per cent. of Americans have never bought a book in their lifetime, and the Americans have the highest standard of living in the world. Literacy is not education and education is not culture."

I asked him whether he was against raising India's percentage of literacy. "There is no necessary connection of literacy with culture, and to impose our literacy and our contemporary literature upon a cultured but illiterate people is to destroy their culture in the name of our own. For the sake of brevity we shall assume without argument that culture implies an ideal quality and a good form that can be realized by all men irrespective of condition; and since we are speaking of culture, chiefly as expressed in words, we shall identify culture with poetry; not the kind of poetry that nowadays babbles of green fields or that merely reflects social behaviour, or our private reactions to passing events, but with reference to that whole class of prophetic literature that includes the *Bible*, the *Vedas*, the *Edda*, the *great epics*, and in general, the *world's best books*, and the *most philosophical*, if we agree with Plato that *Wonder is the beginning of philosophy*. Of these books, many existed long before they were written down. Many have never been written down and others have been or will be lost. From the the Indian point of view a man can only be said to *know* what he knows *by heart*; what he must go to

a book to be reminded of, he merely knows of. Our real concern is with the fallacy involved in the attachment of an absolute value to literacy, and the very dangerous consequences that are involved in the setting up of "literacy" as a standard by which to measure the cultures of unlettered peoples. Our blind faith in literacy not only obscures for us the significance of other skills (like oral traditions of all great literatures) so that we care not under what such human condition a man may have to earn his living, if only he can read, no matter what, in his hours of leisure; it is also one of the fundamental grounds of inter-racial prejudice and becomes a prime factor in the spiritual impoverishment of all the "Backward" people whom we propose to "Civilise."

We next discussed the profound ignorance of even fairly educated Americans about Indian affairs not to speak of the abysmal ignorance of the average American. I asked Dr. Coomaraswamy what he thought of the handful of American scholars who teach Sanskrit or head departments of Oriental studies in certain large American universities. To be specific, I asked him what he thought of American scholars like William Norman Brown of the University of Pennsylvania, J. C. Archer of Yale University, and others at Harvard, Columbia and California. "They are all able scholars," Coomaraswamy admitted, "but American Indologists are only philologists, and to them Indic studies are not a living experience. For an American to teach Sanskrit or to do research in Indic studies may show a love for quaint things or, what is even worse, be just a calling. What this country needs is a department of Oriental studies in every college and university, staffed by

scholars to whom Oriental studies are a living experience and not just an academic discipline."

I asked him what he thought of the need for a cultural attache in all of our embassies and consulates, now that we are organising for the first time the Indian Foreign Service and opening embassies and consular offices in the major countries of the world.

"It is very important," Dr. Coomaraswamy replied. "Like France and other countries, we need a cultural attache in every embassy and the men who are sent for this work ought to be men who are Indians, first and last, and yet capable of being citizens of the world. I hope Pandit Nehru does not overlook this."

Speaking of Pandit Nehru, he observed: "Nehru is the man of the hour and of the moment, because we have been caught unawares and unprepared, and he speaks a language that the West understands; Gandhi, despite all his errors, is the man of the age—our age. Gandhi is great because he has dared to speak of non-violence in a time of violence, of peace and brotherhood in a time of degradation and human destruction. He has spoken of man's highest inner quality, and though we, who are of limited vision, cannot expect to follow him, we cannot refrain from admiring and even worshipping him—a man who is showing us a way which cannot perhaps be followed until mankind is tamed. *We in the West want Gandhi's India and no other. Don't think that by imitating us in the West, monkey do as monkey see, you are doing anything but monkey tricks. The greatest tribute I can pay the Mahatma is that he is the only un-purchasable man in the world.*"

Lack of space prevents me from recording completely here even a few of the views and expositions

of Dr. Coomaraswamy on various subjects. But I must mention that he thinks very highly of Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, Baba Herur, and Stella Kramrisch, in the realm of Indian art. He paid a glowing tribute to Stella Kramrisch's recent monumental study of *The Hindu Temple*. It is difficult to do justice to Coomaraswamy's views on art in this brief article, for he has written about art, not just Oriental art, in the last four decades with such mastery and understanding. He expounds the traditional philosophy of art as exemplified in the traditional arts and crafts from the classical, Oriental and mediaeval European times.

"What is the purpose of art?" one might ask. His answer is simple, "Effective communication, as ever."

Dr. Coomaraswamy continued: "If India would regain her soul she must go back to her classical art, music, handicrafts, and dance, above all to her sages and her scriptures. We need more Radhakrishnans, Bharatan Kumarappas and Das Guptas, men who can understand and expound the spirit and culture of ancient India."

Regarding the problems raised by the contact between East and West, Dr. Coomaraswamy had a great deal to say. It is necessary to lay down here his views with the precision with which he invariably writes and speaks. To Dr. Coomaraswamy, "East and West imports a cultural rather than a geographical antithesis; an opposition of the traditional or ordinary way of life that survives in the East to the modern and irregular way of life that now prevails in the West. It is because such an opposition as this could not have been felt before the Renaissance that we say that the problem is one that presents itself only accidentally in terms of geography; it is one of

times much more than places. For if we leave out of account the "modernistic" and individual philosophies of today, and consider only the great tradition of the magnanimous philosophers, whose philosophy was also a religion that had to be lived if it was to be understood, it will be soon found that the distinctions of cultures in East and West, or for that matter North and South, are comparable only to those of dialects; all are speaking what is essentially one and the same spiritual language, employing different words but expressing the same ideas, and very often by means of identical idioms. Otherwise stated, there is a universally intelligible language, not only verbal but also visual, of the fundamental ideas on which the different civilizations have been founded. But if East and West are at cross purposes it is only because the West is determined, at once resolved and economically determined to keep on going it knows not where, and calls this rudderless voyage 'progress.' "

To Dr. Coomaraswamy the reason for this cultural impasse is simple and obvious. "This apparent problem of East and West is there because we have not produced enough scholars to whom not only Latin and Greek( but also Arabic or Persian, Sanskrit or Tamil, Chinese or Tibetan are still living languages in the sense that there are to be found formulations of principles pertinent to all men's lives; we need translators bearing in mind that to translate without betrayal one must have experienced oneself the content that is to be carried across."

Dr. Coomaraswamy continued, "That is, we need theologians who think no more or less in terms of Christian than of Islamic or Taoist theology, and who

have realized by a personal verification that, as Philo said, *all men whether Greeks or Barbarians actually recognise and serve one and the same God.*"

He warned against what he called the indiscriminate and undigested cultural contacts between the East and West. There are two possible and very different results that can follow from the cultural contact between East and West. Once can, like Jawaharlal Nehru, and in his own words, "become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere and at home nowhere, or being still oneself, one can learn to find oneself in place anywhere and at home everywhere—in the profoundest sense a citizen of the world."

Dr. Coomaraswamy, who is well known here, in Europe and in India only in scholarly and learned circles, has consistently shunned publicity and the American craze for personal exhibitionism.

Though he has been living and writing in the United States for the last thirty years, he is not as well known as any cheap politician—Indian or American—who may champion the cause of India, or as the author of an average best seller, because Dr. Coomaraswamy speaks and writes with such care, precision and scholarship that make his utterances look almost learned mathematical formulas, far beyond the comprehension of even the intelligent lay reader, not to speak of the uninformed but articulate politician. And even those scholars that know about him or have read his writings know very little about his career or his background.

Yet some knowledge of his background is necessary for the understanding of his thought. Most students of Coomaraswamy's writings may not know

that his middle name is Kentish and that his mother was British. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was born seventy years ago in Colombo, the son of Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, the first Hindu barrister and a scholar in English, Pali and Sanskrit. Unfortunately, Sir Mutu died before his son was two years old and the young Ananda was brought up in England by his British mother. He received his education first at Wycliffe College at Stonehouse in Gloucestershire and later at the University of London from which institution he obtained the degree of Doctor of Science in Geology. At 22 he began contributing articles to learned periodicals and at 25 he was appointed Director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. It was while working in Ceylon that he discovered the tragedy of the imposition of Western culture and "civilization" on Oriental life, arts, and crafts. Since then Coomaraswamy has described, defended and championed the cause of Oriental arts and crafts which were fast disappearing in the face of Occidental, machine-made, mass-produced cheap manufactures.

From 1905 to 1917 Dr. Coomaraswamy travelled extensively both in Europe and the Orient, observing and studying the tragic results of the inevitable impact of two cultures. When in 1917 he was appointed Research Fellow in Indian, Iranian and Moham-medan Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Dr. Coomaraswamy had already become well known as an outstanding scholar in studies pertaining to a dozen fields and countries ranging from ancient Greece and India down to the human problems of modern Asia and Europe. Since 1917, Dr. Coomaraswamy had written and lectured, expounding all that is truest, noblest and best in the world's great religions, philo-



**Lady E. C. Coomaraswamy (in June 1925) died in England in 1942 at the age of 92.**



**Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy as a young boy with his grandmother, mother and aunt, in England.**

sophies and arts. He was the author of more than sixty books and monographs.

As we drove back to Dr. Coomaraswamy's country residence in Needham, Massachusetts, he told me he would be retiring the following year from the museum and that he was planning to return to India after an absence of thirty years, to settle down to enter into what he called, "this *vanaprastha* and *sanyasa ashramas*." I asked him where he was likely to settle. "Perhaps at the foot of the Himalayas or in Tibet. Some spot where I shall be least accessible."

I asked the Doctor whether, after having lived thirty years in Boston, accustomed to all the myriad comforts and conveniences of the American way of life, he would not find life in the Himalayas difficult. He answered, "These comforts are beneath contempt! Look at this house. I don't have a radio because I can't stand one. The longer I have lived in the United States the more Indian I have become, and therefore I shall be happy when I settle down in India."

As Mrs. Coomaraswamy showed me the Doctor's large, well furnished and book-littered study upstairs, I noticed that his library contained books in some dozen languages. Mrs. Coomaraswamy explained that the Doctor works every day, including Sundays, from seven in the morning until ten in the evening, permitting himself very little relaxation.

In the midst of innumerable paintings, sculptures, bronzes, books and manuscripts, almost hidden away, were two typewriters. Pointing to the typewriters, Mrs. Coomaraswamy explained, "That is the Doctor's and this is mine." I saw a pile of typed manuscripts next to her machine, and Mrs. Coomaraswamy added that she was completing a large book on the history

of Indian thought which she hopes to finish before she accompanies her husband to India.

As I went downstairs to bid the Doctor goodbye and thank him for sparing me the time, he asked me whether I had studied Plato's *Republic* and Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas*. I said I had read the *Republic*, but not *Peaks and Lamas*. He showed me a copy of the book and described it as "one of those very rare books which it is almost impossible to over-praise." And as for Plato's *Republic*, he advised, "Read it again." As Mrs. Coomaraswamy drove me to the station where I was to catch the train back to New York, she further explained the Doctor's views on various subjects with a zeal and understanding befitting an ardent disciple.

## THE NINTH OF SEPTEMBER

(Mr. Robert Winzer Bruce, Vermont, U.S.A.)

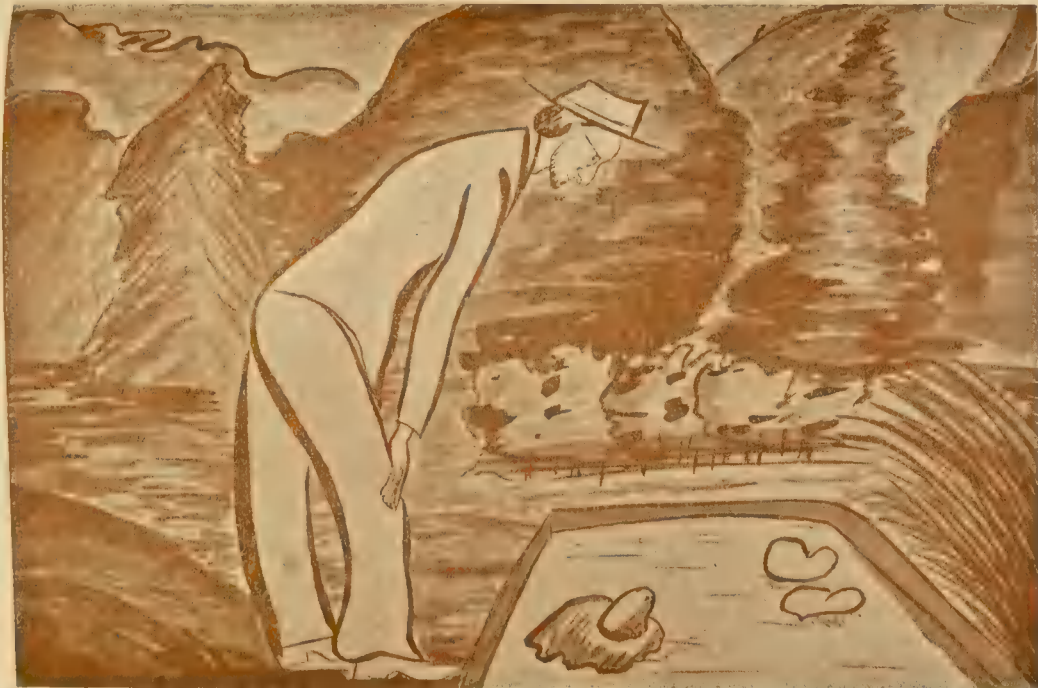
I was at the home of Dr. Coomaraswamy on the day of his death. I was just ready to show him some of my paintings when he was stricken.

He had been up in his room all morning working on a book, he was finishing. About 11 a.m. he came down to the front lawn where Mrs. Coomaraswamy and I were trimming some shrubbery.

"I wish I were 10 years younger," he said watching us work.

"Well sometimes I wish I were too," I said hoping to cheer him up with a jolly word. (I had just turned 31).

He came on down into the garden and talked a while about pleasant things while watching a large bull frog in the gold fish pool. He asked me if I had finished Kumarappa's book *Capitalism, Socialism and*



Dr. Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy in the garden during the last hour of his life—September 9th, 1947. He is shown enjoying looking at a large bullfrog which had made his home in the small gold fish pool. Drawn by Mr. Robert Winzer Bruce.

*Villagism* which he had loaned me. He said he had given a copy to Professor Sorokin of Harvard University but had not had a chance to see him since. Soon he left us and went around to the garden back of the house.

Then Mrs. Coomaraswamy and I went up to my car to get out my paintings. I set them out against the car and she called the Doctor. He came around from the back of the house and up to the car saying "I feel dizzy headed." He sat down on the ground, with Mrs. Coomaraswamy's help. Then he lay back and lost consciousness. In a few minutes I thought he was dead, for he never moved or regained consciousness. In the meantime, we were rushing around getting water to throw in his face, trying to call an ambulance, a doctor and doing everything we could think of to do.

When the ambulance and a doctor arrived about ten minutes later, the doctor said that Dr. Coomaraswamy was dead of a heart attack and that there was nothing we could have done to save him.

I could hardly believe what I knew was true. He was the first person I ever saw die. What a simple process death is, I thought, and how natural. It is no more than lying down to sleep when you are tired.

I knew I had seen the passing of a great man. It seemed a shame that I should be chosen to see it, who had known him so short a while, whose knowledge of him and his work was so lacking, whose acquaintance with his stature was so limited. There were many I knew, who could much more appreciate the magnitude of such an event. It was an honor, which through no merit of mine, I was given. The responsibilities of

of this possession I begin to assume in giving what I can for this book.

He is the first world-wide scholar I have known. His immense learning in Art, History, Theology, Symbolism, Religious Psychology, Christianity and Greek Mythology awed me in our first private conversation. His intimate acquaintance with the details of the literary works of the Greeks, the Romans, the Church Fathers and Mystics, as well as the labyrinthine ways of Hinduism and Buddhism rather startled me.

His humility, his fair mindedness and the ease with which I could talk with him seemed amazing in the face of his vast scholarship. At that time a couple of weeks before his death he showed me a pile of 18 unfinished manuscripts upon which he was working.

Besides his learning and his humility there is one other quality of which I must speak. That is his physical grace. He was very tall and thin but straight and he moved with an extraordinary gracefulness. The raising of a hand in gesture was, while not in the least dramatic or studied, somehow beautiful. Perhaps it was the naturalness of his movement. Perhaps it was the reflection of the serenity of his soul. I don't know, I only know I saw it and would like to see it again, it is so rare a thing

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### ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

*(Dr. Marguerite Beck Block, Associate in Religion,  
Columbia University, New York.)*

As this issue† of the Review goes to press, we are saddened by news of the passing of one of its



**A sketch of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy done by Mr. Robert Winzer Bruce.**

valued contributors, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. In the four articles and many book reviews of his which we have been privileged to publish, he has given us generously of his vast erudition and his stimulating originality of thought. We shall in future feel the lack of his personal interest, expressed in many helpful suggestions and criticisms. We shall also miss his salty (sometimes peppery!) comments on our editorial emendations of his texts.

Besides his friendly co-operation with the *Review of Religion* since its modest beginnings, we have still other causes for gratitude to him. Our splendid selection of slides of Indian images and temples, in the Bush Collection of Religion and Culture, was made with his advice, and very largely from his own photographs. And his works, the *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, *Rajput Painting*, *The Origin of the Buddha Image*, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, and *Yakshas*, to name but a few, have been the foundation stones on which our card index is built.

There are others far better qualified to praise Dr. Coomaraswamy's life work in the field of Oriental art the great collections assembled in Boston under his direction, the depth and breadth of his research, and the richness of his literary output, but the present writer wishes here to pay tribute to him as a teacher. Some of us who were fortunate enough to attend his course in Indian art at the Metropolitan Museum, in 1933 I think it was, will never forget the unique quality of the experience. We were not permitted to take notes (they were furnished us on mimeographed sheets) but sat in the Stygian darkness and stifling jungle heat of the unventilated classroom, our attention concentrated on the brilliant images on the screen

—strange, fascinating, repellent, beautiful! And the quiet, even tones of the lecturer's voice flowed on, carrying us with him into an unknown, exotic world—evoking rather than expounding, revealing esoteric meanings, arousing in us feelings and dim racial memories we had never known we possessed. It was more like an initiation into ancient mysteries than a course in "art appreciation"! We emerged a trifle shaken into the spring brightness of Fifth Avenue, with the dazed eyes of one who truly "on honey-dew hath fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise."

Besides this peculiar glamor with which he invested his subject, one remembers also the sharp, pungent remarks with which he expressed his scorn of all poor craftsmanship: "After the curtain has gone up, it is too late to produce a masterpiece," a maxim to which he lived up with meticulous care, each lecture of his being as precisely constructed as a ship model. We learned from him that art is of the very stuff of life, to be *used*, not stared at in a museum, that it has a normal function in human life, and is not (or should not be) "the pearl in a sick oyster": "Art is simply man's handiwork done finely." His contempt for the pathological exhibitionism of so much of contemporary art was distinctly refreshing.

One of Dr. Coomaraswamy's most endearing traits was his generosity toward many other workers in his field, and his liberal appreciation of their contributions. When the dancer, La Meri, was seeking a publisher for her magnificent book on *The Gesture Language of the Hindu Dance*, it was his gracious offer to write a Foreword, thus lending his own great prestige to the work of an unknown author, which won for it accept-

ance by a distinguished university press. Another example of this fine spirit was his warm friendship for the late Heinrich Zimmer, who came to our shores a refugee from Hitler's Germany, and since Zimmer's untimely death, Dr. Coomaraswamy has rendered generous assistance to Mr. Joseph Campbell in his difficult task of editing the Zimmer manuscripts for publication.

In his own philosophy, Coomaraswamy belonged actually to neither East nor West, but to that transcendental realm which includes the highest speculations of both—the metaphysical "one world" of the *Philosophia Perennis*. There he walked, detached and aloof, with his chosen companions—Gautama Buddha, Sankara, Plato, Plotinus, Boehme, and Meister Eckhart. And it was in the terms of this philosophy that he confessed his own faith in

*the impassible "immortal, incorporeal Self of Chandogya Up. VIII. 12.1, the "That" of the famous dictum, "That art thou." And, just as for Plato, so in the Vedic books, this deathless, impassible Inner Man and very Self "dwells together with" the human, mortal, passible self in the "house" or "city" of the body for so long as "we" are alive. It is this (Holy) "Ghost" that we "give up" when we die: and the poignant question arises, "In whom, when I go forth, shall I be going forth?" (Prasna Up. VI.3), the answer, according to which we shall be "saved" or "lost" depending upon whether before the end we have known "Who we are" . . . .\**

\*Review of Religion, November (1947).

\*Review of Religion, VII (1942), 35f.

## A TRIBUTE

(*Dr. Alvan C. Eastman, Director, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Canada.*)

*Formerly Assistant to Dr. Coomaraswamy.*

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has had a number of prominent Japanese scholars who have left their mark as interpreters of Far Eastern arts to Americans, such as Okakura Kakuzo, Anesaki and Kojiro Tomita, the present Curator. The interpretation of the arts of China, Korea and Japan has therefore been going on for several generations. But the extraordinary gifts of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy have interpreted to the present generation the arts and culture of India within the short span of approximately thirty years of his association with that Museum.

This was first as Curator of Indian and Moham-  
medan arts in which time he built the finest collection of Indian arts without exception in America. Later, not only Boston but the world at large profited by his phenomenal scholarship, his penetrating understanding and his graceful literary style while he was Fellow for Research. Certain of his publications the *Dance of Shiva* and other early essays—are already classics. His typically scholastic writings and their revelation of truth, the succinctness of his statements are too well known and appreciated by all Indian scholars to need comment here. Suffice it to say that one of his great contributions, the conclusive proof of the Indian origin of the Buddha image, was made in comparatively few pages, whereas volumes had been written by his immediate predecessors to prove the Greek origin. His researches and contributions are without parallel in the field of Indian art.

Dr. Coomaraswamy reached three worlds—the world of scholarship, in some measure the world of educated men in the West, and the world of educated men in Asia. In particular he reached a very large body of his own countrymen. All this was accomplished apart from his immediate contributions to building and publishing the collections of Indian and Mohammedan art in the Boston Museum.

In his contact with students he was usually encouraging, always loyal and ever kind. He found time to read their manuscripts, frequently offering helpful suggestions and aiding them in their careers by good reports whenever the opportunity arose. He was always the warm and sympathetic scholar, as all who knew him personally will remember. They today are carrying on the work he inspired and stimulated them to do, and will be ever grateful to his memory.

## A TRIBUTE FROM BLACKFRIARS

(Mr. Bernard Kelly, Windsor, England).

News has reached us of the death, shortly after his 70th birthday, of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Dr. Coomaraswamy was for many years an occasional contributor to BLACKFRIARS, and it will be remembered that Eric Gill wrote of him in the *Autobiography*: 'I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding.' During all his curatorship at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts—where he was wont to describe himself simply 'as a research fellow at this museum'—the degree of distinction in his connoisseurship and the vastness of the

learning displayed in his expository and literary work was almost fabulous. Indeed it is entirely in accord with a fully established reputation, rather than a merely private judgment, to say that no work left his hands that any living man could have done more perfectly.

The introduction to Western minds of the cultural fruit of the East was the external structure of the task within which his life's work developed. It involved finding a common language of thought in which the products of a consciously metaphysical way of life could be explained to modern Western people. This again involved affirmations at two levels. The first was to show in folk-art and folk-lore, the fairy tale and the old wife's tale the sturdy, if almost submerged, survival of a traditional and enlightened wisdom common to all peoples from time immemorial until yesterday. The second was the developed metaphysical understanding of art, its operation and its products, its exemplary, formal and final causes. Here he found it necessary to recall a public for whom metaphysics had come to be associated only with silly jokes about looking for a black hat in the dark to the living relevance of the great theses of Plato and Aristotle, the Platonists, Augustine and the scholastics. Thus it fell to the Indian scholar to teach his Western public their own traditional wisdom in order that they might have some ground from which to understand his.

That, so to say, was the task we Westerners gave him to awaken us. For the life's work it was only a stepping stone. Samples of his later work are to be found in such exegetical essays, published in the journal of the American Oriental Society and similar transatlantic journals, as *Rgveda* 10, 90, 1 *aty atisthad*

*dasangulam*. To read such work, even with an understanding lagging far behind his scholarship and the angelic simplicity of his exposition, is not to be assailed by any superficial, because generalised, theory of the universality of religions, but to be made witness, if not participant in the penetration of light by light: East and West respectively illuminating each other while retaining their distinctive idioms.

An angel among intellectuals, yes, as St. Thomas was. But Catholics who have come in contact with him or his work will remember also the high challenge of his unfailing charity. He never spoke of devotion or of the love of Christ as if he had not experienced them.

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## A TRIBUTE

from "*THE WYCLIFFE STAR*"

(Mr. W. A. Sibly, Stonehouse, Glos., England.)

The death of Dr. Coomaraswamy less than three weeks after widespread celebrations last August, in Ceylon and elsewhere, of his 70th birthday, came as a shock to friends and admirers in many lands. For the brief biography which follows we are indebted to *The Times*, *The Ceylon Daily News*, and to old numbers of *The Wycliffe Star*.

His grandfather was the first Tamil representative in the Ceylon Legislative Council. His father, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, was a leading light of that Council and of the Legislative Assembly, and the friend of many Englishmen, among them Disraeli, who presented him with a Royal Worcester tea-set as a token of his regard. In 1875 Sir Mutu married an English lady named Beeby from Kent, and when

Ananda was born in 1877 he received the second name of "Kentish." Lady Coomaraswamy left for England next year for the sake of her health, and her husband died on the very day that he was sailing to rejoin her.

Probably it was the fact of Mr. G. W. Sibly's vegetarianism which brought A.K.C. to Wycliffe in 1889, when he was twelve years old, and he remained at school for more than six years. Just at first he found adjustment difficult, and there were a few stormy and exciting episodes which older Old Wycliffe's will remember, but he soon settled down to play a distinguished part in the life of the School. He was a House Monitor by 1892, and became Curator of the Field Club and a Prefect in 1893, for he had great intellectual gifts. Dr. Arthur Sibly fostered his interest in Science, and encouraged him to contribute a three-page article to this magazine in April, 1895, on the Geology of Dove-row Hill. As a boy he was a great fossil-hunter. During this year he was Head of the School, and on June 4th, in what the *Star* describes as the best debate of the session, he moved in the Literary Society "that the slaughter of animals for food is neither necessary, beneficial nor right." It is an interesting commentary on this motion that fifty years later he sent his younger son Rama Ponnambalam Coomaraswamy from Boston, U.S.A., to Springfield, the vegetarian House at Wycliffe. He left, possibly for a visit to Ceylon, in 1895, but was back again at Wycliffe in 1897, when he played for the 1st Association XI and was commended for his skill at centre-half.

Having secured his inter-Arts while still at school, he entered University College, London, and gained his